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LIFE AND LETTERS OF H. TAINE

1828–1852

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1828–1852

Translated from the French by

MRS. R. L. DEVONSHIRE

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Preface

It is not our intention to present to the public a detailed biography of Hippolyte Taine; we merely desire to facilitate the study of the letters and unpublished fragments which form the object of this publication. Many admirers of his mode of thought have already written of him more fully than we could do [1]; doubtless many more will do so when the documents which we are now bringing to light allow of a more complete study of the man and his work. They can fulfil this task with a greater freedom of mind than is possible to us; our duty is to render it easy for them, whilst faithfully adhering to the instructions left by M. Taine.

One of the principal traits in his character was his horror of publicity and of indiscreet revelations concerning his private life, which—noble and dignified as it was—he kept from the outside world with jealous care. He could not bear the thought that a photograph or an inter-

[1] See Emile Boutmy, *Taine, Schérer, Laboulaye*; G. Monod, *Renan, Taine, Michelet*; de Margerie, *H. Taine*; Barzelotti, *La Vie d'Hippolyte Taine*; Sainte Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. xiii., and *Nouveaux Lundis*, vol. viii.; Paul Bourget, *Essais de Psychologie*; Vicomte de Vogüé, *Devant le Siècle*; André Chevrillon, Introduction to *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*; Victor Giraud, *Essai sur Taine*; and many articles by other writers. The book last mentioned contains a very faithful biography, a list of M. Taine's works, and another list of the principal articles written concerning him.

view concerning his home should be exposed to the public gaze. He always refused to allow illustrated papers to publish his portrait; and it was a great sacrifice to his colleagues on the *Débats* when he consented to appear in the picture by Jean Béraud, reproduced in 1889 in the *Centenaire du Journal des Débats*. When, about the same time, his friend, Léon Bonnat, painted the admirable portrait of him which was shown at the Exhibition of 1900, it was only on the express condition that it should not be exhibited in his lifetime. And, by his Will, any reproduction of "intimate or private letters" is absolutely forbidden. "The only letters or notes which may be published," he adds, "are those which treat of purely general or speculative matters, such as Philosophy, History, Art or Physiology; and, even in those, passages which in any degree concern private life shall be left out, and none of those letters shall be published without the consent of my heirs, after they have cut out the passages above referred to."

In this work, therefore, no facts of a private nature will be found, save such as have been thought indispensable for the history of his ideas and the illustration of the surroundings in which they were developed. Indeed, he often expressed unrestricted admiration, in the presence of his family and friends, for great English biographies such as Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Sir George Trevelyan's *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, Bulwer's *Life of Viscount Palmerston*, etc., etc. We will endeavour to conform to these models, whilst remaining within the limits imposed on us by his express wish.

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PART I

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

CHAPTER I

The Family—Early Education—Correspondence

HIPPOLYTE ADOLPHE TAINE, who came of an old Ardennes stock, was born at Vouziers on April 21, 1828. His family originated in the village of Barby, near Rethel; one of his ancestors, Joseph Taine, settled at Rethel in 1675, and became an alderman and governor of the town.[1] For several generations Joseph Taine's descendants lived in this little town the modest and honourable life of good provincial burghers. Hippolyte Taine's great-grandfather, Pierre Taine, a highly intelligent man, had been nicknamed *the Philosopher* by his townsmen, and we may point out to believers in the theory of heredity that, through several intermarriages among his descendants, he

[1] A complete genealogy of the Taine family, by M. Pillot, will be found in the March number (1902) of the *Revue Historique Ardennaise.*

appears in more than one relationship amongst the forefathers of M. Taine. The maternal grandfather of Hippolyte Taine, M. Bezanson, had a scientific turn of mind; he had studied magnetism with Dr. Chapelin, and the grandson carefully preserved treatises of philosophy, mathematics and algebra, written by the old man towards the end of his life. His father's sisters, elderly maiden ladies, who led in their small native town the most pious, sedentary, and narrowly austere life, had nevertheless inherited a taste for abstract ideas, and we find the following lines in the correspondence of their nephew, then a professor at Nevers: "My aunt Eugénie has written me a letter, in which she advises me as to the direction of my metaphysical studies, with a logical argument in support of the system of philosophy that she suggests"

Hippolyte Taine's father, Jean Baptiste Antoine Taine, who died when his son was entering his thirteenth year, was a man of a cultured mind, full of wit and natural talent, and the composer of pretty verses and merry songs, still repeated by his countrymen more than fifty years after his death. He had a passionate love of the country, and used often to take his little son with him when, in the course of his professional duties as a country lawyer, he drove through the beautiful Ardennes woods which adorn the neighbourhood of Vouziers. To those impressions of early childhood may probably be traced the keen appreciation of the beauties of Nature, and the intense love of forest scenery which so frequently show themselves in Hippolyte Taine's works and correspondence. The first rudiments of Latin were also taught him by the young father, so soon to be taken from him, and,

before M. J. B. A. Taine's precarious health compelled him to give up the lessons to his son, the boy had already acquired a solid foundation for his subsequent studies. We shall see, as we proceed with this correspondence, what Hippolyte Taine's mother [1] was to him and with what devotion and solicitude she fulfilled her gentle mission. Nothing was more touching than the deep affection and perfect confidence which united the son to his mother, and we cannot give her greater praise than by reproducing the following fragment of a will that M. Taine wrote in December, 1879, a few months before losing her: "If my mother survives me, my wife and children will remember that for forty years she was my only friend, that she afterwards shared with them the first place in my heart, that her life has been all devotion and tenderness; they will try to fill my place, to bring her here [2]; whatever I may have done and whatever they may do, my debt to her can never be paid; no woman ever was so perfect a mother."

Two of Mme. Taine's brothers also took a particular interest in the education of their nephew; the elder, M. Adolphe Bezanson, became, at his brother-in-law's death, the guide and adviser of the widow and orphans. The younger, Alexandre, who had spent several years in the United States, took a pleasure, on his return, in teaching English to his young nephew, thus rendering him signal service. M. Taine remained deeply attached and

[1] *Née* Marie Virginie Bezanson; she was her husband's first cousin.

[2] Boringe, the country house in Savoie, where this will was written.

grateful to him, and dedicated the *Notes sur l'Angleterre* to him as "a testimony of gratitude."

Hippolyte Taine's early education was therefore given him entirely by his family, at Vouziers; he only spent a few hours every day in a small school kept by M. Pierson. He received the Holy Communion for the first time when still very young, in August, 1838. When, in 1839, illness compelled M. J. B. A. Taine to find other teachers for his son, he was sent to a boarding school at Rethel, kept by an old priest and his sister, a former nun, where he remained eighteen months, until his father's death. He was a boarder, but under the immediate supervision of his grandmother, Mme. M. J. Taine, and of the two maiden aunts already mentioned; he spent his half-holidays in the old family house, hunting for intellectual pabulum on the dusty shelves of an old bookcase in an unused room. He devoured everything that came to his hands, especially the classical authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which formed the chief part of the reading of serious middle-class people under the Restoration. His uncles also made him a present about this time of the works of Washington Irving, in English, and of two large volumes of the *Travels of Dumont d'Urville.* These books, which are still in his library, were read and re-read by him again and again; he translated some of Washington Irving's tales, and, forty years later, he still used to speak with delight of this outlook over a larger world of which he had already had a glimpse through the conversation of his uncle from America.

He ever kept a happy recollection of those days of his childhood, and of the half-holidays spent at his grand-

mother's house. On Sundays he was spared neither high Mass nor Vespers, and the sermons seemed long to the litttle schoolboy, hungering for freedom; but, when he came home, there were the little Sunday treats, the old cook's tarts, and, above all, the delectable hours of silent reading, when he would become absorbed in the *Arabian Nights* or in *Rip van Winkle*. Thirteen years later he wrote, after a visit to his relations: "I am glad I spent a day at Rethel; their ways are old-fashioned, but I like them because they are natural and finished. Also they are very good people, and there is something within me particularly 'Rethelois,' the family sentiment."

M. Taine senior having succumbed, during the holidays of 1840, to the disease which was killing him, M. Adolphe Bezanson persuaded his sister to seek a mode of instruction less imperfect and more appropriate to the precocious intelligence of the young Hippolyte; he chose for him the Mathé boarding-school, the scholars of which attended the classes of the Bourbon College. Hippolyte entered this school in 1841, at the age of thirteen and a half. Mme. Taine, being kept at Vouziers by the winding up of her husband's estate, was obliged to send her son to Paris by himself; but the boy being very tender-hearted and somewhat fragile, was unable to bear the sorrow of separation and the indifferent catering of the Parisian boarding-school, and his mother, becoming alarmed, hastened the arrangement of her affairs and joined him in Paris, with her two daughters. They settled down in the Batignolles district, which was at that time rather like a remote country town, and then began the life of ardent labour and austere seclusion which young Taine was to lead until he entered

the École Normale. He was at that time far from thinking of a professorial or literary career, and it was not thought of for him. His mother wished him to become a notary, like his two uncles; he thought of nothing but working hard and learning much. When, a few years later, the question of his career was seriously discussed in the family council, it was not on account of his remarkable gifts that the idea of his becoming a notary was abandoned, but because prudence would not allow of the disposal, in favour of one person, of the whole modest fortune of the Taine family which would have been necessitated by the purchase of a practice.

The greatest pleasures of this studious boyhood were walks in the Parc Monceau—then in a state of absolute neglect—into which Mme. Taine had a right of entry; it was almost like the forest of his childhood. Then, during the holidays, there were visits to M. Adolphe Bezanson, at Poissy, where the boy spent long days on the Seine, angling with his uncles; they taught him to swim, a form of exercise in which he excelled and which he much enjoyed all through his life; but his pleasantest recollections were of the long hours spent by the water which shimmered and trembled under the delicate shadow of the willows, and of his solitary rambles in the forest of St. Germain.

As soon as he arrived in Paris, Hippolyte Taine drew up a scheme of study which he rigorously observed, and the execution of which was made easy for him by his serious and intellectual environment. His grandfather, M. Nicolas Bezanson, lived in the same house as Mme. Taine, and his conversation contributed largely to the

boy's scientific development. The whole family was full of enthusiasm for work; the two girls, guided by their brother, were acquiring a literary culture rare amongst women of their time. Art was not neglected; Hippolyte and his younger sister, Sophie, were passionately fond of music, and quarrelled over the piano during the leisure hour. The elder sister, Virginie, who had a great gift for painting, excited by her comments the artistic curiosity of her brother, and accompanied him on those visits to the Louvre Museum, where he found so much pleasure and profit.

At the Lycée Bourbon, he formed friendships with Planat, Crosnier de Varigny, Prévost-Paradol, Cornelius de Witt, Emile Durier, Emile Saigey, etc.

Hippolyte Taine, whose numerous scholastic triumphs were a source of pride to the Mathé school, studied rhetoric [1] and philosophy under the direction of a very distinguished young professor, M. Hatzfeldt, who soon became his friend.

M. Hatzfeldt carefully preserved the best essays of his brilliant pupil; he was proud to think that Hippolyte Taine perhaps owed to him the first idea of his work on La Fontaine; an essay on *Andromaque* probably was the origin of an unpublished work on the three Andromaches (Euripides', Racine's, and Virgil's), written at Nevers in January, 1852.

During this school year, 1846–1847, besides his ordinary

[1] At that time the scholars who had passed through the seven first classes or forms (8me, 7me, 6me, 5me, 4me, 3me and 2de) of a French *Lycée* or secondary school, usually divided, some of them choosing mathematical and some classical studies; the latter, on leaving the *seconde* class, went for a year into a class called *Rhétorique*, and for the following year into a *Philosophie* class.

college work, Hippolyte Taine wrote many private essays, some of which have been preserved, amongst others a *History of the Church in France from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Centuries*, followed by a chapter on *The Reformation*, a *History of the Third Estate and of Parliament*, a *History of the French Party in France from the beginning of the Wars of Religion until the death of Richelieu*, and some *Notes on French Literature of the Sixteenth Century*. The average length of these essays was from twenty to thirty pages of M. Taine's peculiarly close handwriting.

A humorous poem, written in the same year, for the St. Charlemagne[1] banquet has also been preserved, and a few history compositions, of which one, on *The Origin, Development and Fall of the League*, was placed first on the list at the Lycée Bourbon, and was long remembered by Hippolyte Taine's schoolfellows.

Twenty-one years later, when presiding at the annual banquet of the Lycée Condorcet, he said, thinking of this year of productive study :—

"If we have had glimpses of ideas in criticism and in history, they have been suggested to us by the study of Rhetoric. We were told that a speech should be appropriate to the character of the speaker, and this led us to study those characters : we went to the Public Library, to the Louvre Museum, to the Cabinet des Estampes ; we discovered by degrees in what way a modern man differs from an ancient, a Christian from a Pagan, a Roman from

[1] The Emperor Charlemagne is the patron saint of French schools, and school festivities are held in Paris every year on his name-day. A banquet takes place, during which several students are invited to recite original verses or to make speeches.

a Greek, and a Roman of the time of Augustus from a Roman of the time of Scipio. We endeavoured to express those differences, and we began to guess at the real history, which is that of the soul, of the deep alterations which take place in hearts and minds, according to the changes in their physical and moral environment."

The first letters we propose to publish were addressed to M. Hatzfeldt.

To M. Hatzfeldt.

August 13, 1847.

SIR,—You probably know by this time that I won the *Prix d'Honneur* at the Concours Général.[1] I could not inform you of it beforehand, I myself only heard it on Wednesday evening; and, even if I had written to you at once, you would have seen it in the papers before receiving my letter. I had, besides, three *accessits* at the Concours and all the first prizes at the Lycée.

I owe all this success to you, and I thank you for it. Without you I should never have acquired order, clearness or method. They told me at school to be clear, regular and methodical; you alone did not content yourself with words, you showed me the way to acquire those qualities. If I succeed hereafter it will be thanks to your lessons, for you have taught me to work and to direct my mind, and you will be useful to me in the future as you are in the present. I shall follow the advice you have given me for these holidays. I have Descartes in hand, and, amongst my prizes, I have just received M. Jouffroy's *Lectures on*

[1] *Concours Général.* An open competition held every year between the *élite* of the students of all the *lycées* in France.

Natural Law. We shall meet again next year, I hope. I think I can promise that you will find in me a great taste for philosophy, perhaps also a little natural talent. If I am not mistaken, if seems to me that I have always had some facility in understanding abstract things, and in finding out generalities. Perhaps it is peculiar to a cold and serious mind to enjoy the speculations of philosophy; anyhow, I remember that last year I was delighted to listen to your lectures.

Once again, Sir, accept my thanks. If a strong appreciation of your services and kindness to me could suffice in paying my debt of gratitude to you, it certainly would be paid in full.

To the same.

October 7, 1847.

SIR,—We had hoped to find you at the school to-day, Thursday, as usual, if not to give us a lesson, at least to fix the hours and days of our lectures. M. Lemeignan[1] desires you to come on Saturday or Monday, as you please, to confer with him and with us. As for me, in particular, I long more than ever for your presence. M. Jourdain is not coming to the Collége Bourbon this year; and, from what I saw at the first lesson, I believe that without your help I shall work quite in vain. You alone can point out to me what to read, give a direction to my studies, and make them profitable and useful, as you did for those of last year."

[1] M. Mathé's successor.

CHAPTER II

The Philosophy Class—Introduction to the "Human Destiny"

THE studies of the year 1847–1848 were indeed profitable; at the Bourbon Collége Hippolyte Taine had as Professor of Physics M. Desains, and his philosophy professors were MM. Bernard and Lorquet. He preserved some excellent notes of their classes, as well as a certain number of *dissertations*. During his leisure hours he also undertook private work; we have been able to find three studies on Jouffroy, some essays on the *Faculties of the Soul*, on *Exterior Perception*, on Spinoza's Pantheism, a dialogue on the *Immortality of the Soul*, a treatise on the Beautiful, in the shape of a letter to Emile Planat; and, lastly, a treatise *On Human Destiny*. This last work, dated March, 1848, begins by a sort of intellectual confession, showing the evolution of his ideas, from the age of fifteen until the middle of his year in the Philosophy Class. This document will no doubt be read with interest.

"OF HUMAN DESTINY—INTRODUCTION

This work is not the result of hazard or of curiosity; it is neither a philosophical amusement nor an idle research. It is the answer to a question which I have long put to

myself; it is the close of a slow revolution which has taken place in my mind.

There are certain minds who live confined within themselves, and for whom passions, joys, sorrows and actions are altogether inward. I am of that number; and, if I would look back upon my life, I should have but to recollect the changes, uncertainties, and progress of my thought. If I am now writing this, it is in order to find it again later, and know then what I was now.

Until the age of fifteen I lived in ignorance and tranquillity. I had not yet thought of the future; I knew nothing of it; I was a Christian, and I had never asked myself what this life is worth, where I came from, and what I had to do. . . . Reason appeared in me like a beacon light. I began to suspect that there was something beyond what I had seen, and to grope as in darkness. My religious faith was the first thing which fell before this spirit of inquiry. One doubt provoked another; each article of belief dragged another down with it in its fall. . . . I felt within myself enough honour and strength of will to live as a good man, even after losing my religion. I esteemed my reason too highly to believe in another authority than its own; I refused to recognize rules for my life and the conduct of my thoughts from any other person; I became indignant at the idea of being virtuous through fear and a believer through obedience. Pride and the love of liberty had freed me.

The three following years were happy, three years of research and discovery. I thought but of enlarging my intelligence, increasing my knowledge, and acquiring a stronger sentiment of Truth and of the Beautiful. I

ardently studied History and Antiquity, ever seeking for general truths, aspiring to the knowledge of the whole, i.e. of Man and of Society. I still remember my extraordinary delight when I read M. Guizot's lectures on *European Civilization*. It was like a revelation; I began to look for the general laws of History, then for the general laws of the art of writing. In my inexperience and audacious confidence, I dared to tackle a number of questions which should only be treated by very learned men of a matured mind. But the vanity of my efforts and the insufficiency of my discoveries soon recalled me to common sense. I understood that before knowing the Destiny of Man I must know Man himself. Thus were conceived my first ideas of Philosophy, which developed very much during the time I spent in the *rhétorique* class: this came from the necessity in which I found myself of knowing the character of the men in whose name I wrote, of appreciating the value of their motives, of judging of the passions which should move them, and of the tone which they should take. It was essential to study philosophy in order to avoid the monotony of common-place. At the same time, a great deal of private work and some serious reading excited my mental activity, and provided me with materials for my researches.

It was then, that I returned to true Philosophy, and to the important questions which I had already considered at the beginning. In spite of the loss of my Christianity I had preserved natural beliefs: I believed in the existence of God, in the Immortality of the Soul, and in the Law of Duty. I now came to examine on what foundations I rested those beliefs: I found probabilities and no certainties; I found the proofs offered me weak, it seemed to me

that a contrary opinion might contain an equal share of truth, or rather it seemed to me that all opinions were probable. I became sceptical towards Science and Morality, I went to the extreme limits of doubt, and it seemed to me that every basis of knowledge and of belief was overturned.

So far I had read no philosopher, I had desired to preserve entire freedom for my mind, and a complete independence for my inquiry. I was, therefore, at that time full of a proud joy. I exulted in the havoc I had made; I revelled in exercising my intelligence against the opinions of the vulgar, I thought myself superior to those who believed, because, when I questioned them, they gave me no sound proof of their belief. I continued to go forward, until one day, when I found I had left nothing standing.

Then I felt saddened; I had wounded myself in what I held most dear: I had denied the authority of the intellect which I esteemed so highly. I found myself in a vacuum, in nothingness, lost and engulfed. What could I do? All my beliefs being struck down, Reason counselled immobility and Nature ordered activity. Man cannot remain inactive, his life is a continual aspiration, a ceaseless movement; for him, not to act is to die. I was, moreover, at that age when vitality is powerful, when activity abounds, when the soul seeks for something to which to cling, like those climbing plants, which, at the return of spring, seize the trunk of the tree with all their strength, in order to come out of the shade and to open their flowers in the sunshine. I had an ardent love of Science and of Art, of the Beautiful and of the True. I felt myself capable of great efforts, of tenacious perseverance, if only I had an object to attain, a design to fulfil. I felt a passionate admiration in the

presence of beautiful things, and especially the beauties of Nature; and I suffered when I thought that I did not know how to make use of all this ardour and strength. Besides, I was master of myself; I had accustomed my body and my soul to obey my will; and I had thus preserved myself from those bestial passions which blind and bewilder Man, take him from the study of his destiny, and make him live like an animal, ignorant of the present, and careless of the future. My whole soul, therefore, turned towards the desire to know, and consumed itself all the more because it concentrated all its strength and all its desire on one point only.

During my first months in the Philosophy class, this state of mind was unbearable; I saw nothing but doubt and obscurity. I found in philosophers nothing but contradictions; I considered their proofs puerile or incomprehensible; it seemed to me that metaphysics obscured common sense, and that philosophers, from the heights of their speculations, had not foreseen the simple and natural objections which ruined their systems. I myself, irritated at the uselessness of my efforts, began to play with my reason, I took pleasure in supporting alternate sides of the question; I put scepticism into practice. Then, tired of contradictions, I placed my mind at the service of the newest and most poetical opinion, I supported Pantheism with all my heart. I affected to speak as an artist; this new world pleased me, and I amused myself by exploring it in all its parts. This was my salvation, for, from that moment, metaphysics appeared to me intelligible, and science seemed serious. I reached, after much effort, a height from which I could embrace the whole of the philosophical horizon,

understand the opposition of systems, see the birth of opinions, discover the knot of divergences and the solution of difficulties. I learnt what to examine in order to find out what was fallacious and what was true, I saw the point towards which my researches should tend. Moreover, I was already in possession of Method, which I had studied from curiosity, and for my own amusement. Henceforth I ardently set to work; the clouds dispersed, I understood the origin of my errors, I perceived the Whole and the connecting links. I will now set down what I believe I have found; but, at this very moment, I pledge myself to continue my researches, never pausing, never considering that I know everything, and ever examining my principles anew; it is only thus that Truth can be reached."

We know how, until his last breath, this pledge made by the student of twenty was kept by the man.

CHAPTER III

Admission Examinations to the École Normale—Correspondence

HIPPOLYTE TAINE crowned this year in the Philosophy Class by taking his two degrees of bachelier-ès-sciences and bachelier-ès-lettres, and brilliantly passing the admission examinations to the École Normale Supérieure.[1] He was placed second on the nomination list of candidates, and passed first among a batch of students, which included Edmond About, Francisque Sarcey, Libert, Edouard de Suckau, Auguste Lamm, Paul Albert, Gustave Merlat, Rieder, etc., etc. Prévost-Paradol followed one year later, Hippolyte Taine having done all he could to attract him to this path, and they began as early as their separation in August, 1848, the interesting correspondence of which numerous extracts will be found here.

[1] *École Normale Supérieure.* Founded in 1808 by Napoleon I., with the object of training young professors. Candidates for admission must already be in possession of their diploma as Bachelor of Science or of Letters, according to the branch of studies which they wish to take up; they sign an engagement for ten years' work in Public Education. The Professors of the École Normale take the title of *Maîtres des Conférences.*

To Prévost-Paradol.

August 20, 1848.

My Dear Prévost,—I began my holiday two days ago; I worked from the 11th to the 17th for my *baccalauréat-ès-sciences*.[1] and I have passed, thank goodness; I shall now make a proper use of the two months' holidays which are left to me, and pick up my health and strength. I am doing no reading, no study, no thinking, but living the life of an oyster, of a mollusc, of anything you like. I revel in the country and the open air, I rejoice in rest and indolence, and I roam over fields and woods without taking a book with me save Plato, and sometimes Euripides. My philosophy is not without its use in my pleasures. I find Nature a hundred times more beautiful since I have pondered on what she is; now, when I gaze on the slow movements of the trees, the play of light, the richness and luxury of all those forms and all those colours, when I listen to those soft, continuous, uncertain and harmonious murmurs which alternately rise and fall in the woods, I feel the presence of Universal Life. I no longer look upon the world as a machine but an animal. I find that solitude becomes animated and speaking, and that my soul easily attunes

[1] *Baccalauréat* (low Latin, *bachalariatus*), first degree taken in a French Faculty; the next is *licence*, and the next *doctorate*. It is much more elementary than a Bachelor's degree in an English University. There are two *baccalauréats*—1°, the baccalauréat-*ès-lettres* required of candidates for the Faculties of Medicine and of Law, to the École Normale Supérieure and to several public offices; 2°, the baccalauréat-*ès-sciences* required for admission to the Schools of Medicine and of Pharmacy, to the École Normale Supérieure (scientific section), and the Polytechnic, Military, and Foresters' Schools.

itself to this simple and apparently slumbering life, which is the life of beings inferior to Man.

Would you have thought that Philosophy would lead to all this? Do take it up, and settle down to it bravely and seriously next year. If not, dear friend, your year will be wasted and even harmful. I know you: if you indulge yourself and do not resist your own tastes, you will seek in Philosophy, as you did in History, for nothing but a means of proving your preconceived ideas, you will make use of reasoning and metaphysics to attack all the common and ordinary opinions; you will eagerly embrace every system which appears to you bold and audacious, and it will be sufficient that a thing should seem to you beautiful for you to say: It is true.

I could wager, for instance, that you will give up six months' work to demonstrating that God does not exist, and do you know why? Because the human race before you has believed in Him. Consider, my friend, that this God whose existence seems to me to be mathematically proven, is not the absurd and cruel tyrant taught by religions, and worshipped by the vulgar; consider also that neither is He Bossuet's *God-man*, busy saving or destroying empires, and founding His Church; finally, do not forget that if I believe in Him, it is not because I never doubted, nor from habit or sentiment; but after reasonings and demonstrations more rigorous than those of geometry. Therefore, do work without prejudices, do not let your leaning towards new ideas prejudge the question; give in but to reason and evidence, and you will end, I hope, by sharing my convictions.

That which prevented you this year from accepting them

was the fact that your mind was not yet accustomed to metaphysical evidence; you only believed what you could feel and touch, but, as soon as you have accustomed your intellect to reflect upon and consider pure ideas, freed from their material coverings, in all their simplicity and clearness, you will see the true light and acquire perfect conviction.

I lay great stress on this question of the existence and nature of God, because it is in reality the only question in philosophy; if you are strict in your researches, if you aspire to go back to the fountain-head, you will ever be obliged to return to God; if you wish to know the Beautiful, the Good, the True, if you wish to prove that there is a rule of conduct for Man, an immutable goal for the artist, an absolute certainty for the scientist, you will be obliged to examine the nature of God, and to believe in Him. If the word *God* shocks you, suppress it, and say in its stead: "the Being," but whatever name you give Him, believe in the existence of a Being, who has the whole fulness of the Being, and in whom there is no lack, no defect.

Here is a demonstration of this in six lines: ponder over it and find, if you can, that it is wrong in any one point: see how simple it is; it sets down no premiss, and does not claim as a postulate the existence of anything.

There are but three possibilities:—

1. That nothing exists at all;

2. That an imperfect being or some imperfect beings exist;

3. That a being exists who has the plenitude of the being. Several beings having the plenitude of the being are impossible because they would limit each other.

The first hypothesis is absurd in its own terms, for the

existence of nothingness is contradictory. Nothingness is incomprehensible. It is as much as to say that non-being is, and that what does not exist exists.

The second hypothesis is equally absurd. If the existing Being is imperfect or lacking part of the being, another can be conceived in its stead having more or less of the being. Another being will therefore be possible instead of the one which now is. There will, therefore, be no reason why the one which exists should exist rather than that other, since both are equally possible. The existing Being will therefore have no reason to exist, and will be without a cause, which is absurd; for everything has its reason for existing, either within or outside itself.

Therefore, the third hypothesis stands necessarily, and the evidence of God's existence is the impossibility of any other existence.

You see that I take into consideration none of those things which are perhaps obscure, such as Notion, Ideas, and Matter, and that my whole proof is taken from the very terms of the question.

I am boring you, no doubt, my dear fellow; but, forgive me, it is in the interest of our friendship that I do so. For how could our intimacy last if we were not of the same mind on a question upon which depend not only our opinions, but our actions and the conduct of our lives? Close and sincere friendships have been broken by political disagreements, how much more should our friendship become cooled if we had conflicting convictions about God, the world, human life, in fact everything.

Talking of politics, how you did make me laugh the other day! Are you mad with your N.? why upset his poor

brain? He thinks himself profound by thinking as you do! And you dare to corrupt him while you own to me that you could not make head or tail of M. Proud'hon's theories.[1] If you have become a Proud'honite, send me, if you can, a demonstration of the *Right to Work*; if not, hold thy peace.

Send me a letter as long as this one. Farewell.

To the same.

September 1, 1848.

MY DEAR PRÉVOST,—Yours is certainly the most satirical letter I have ever received. Do you know that it is hard for an apprentice in philosophy to hear his demonstration called theological puns, cassocked quibbles, unintellipible pedantry, etc.?

I recognized your usual chaff, and even your affection, for I can feel through the whole of your epistle that you are only half-mocking, that you are sparing me, and keeping back half your sarcasms and insults. All right, my dear fellow, strike, but hear me.

You begin by reproaching me with what you call a slight contradiction, and you call upon me, in order to avoid consistency, to believe in God no longer, or no longer to speak of the world as an animal. It seems to me that here you make little use of the logic which you despise. I do not see that those two beliefs are incompatible. What is there absurd in saying that the world, emanating from God

[1] Pierre Joseph Proud'hon's principal writings, *Avertissement aux propriétaires, Solution du Problème Social, Le Droit au Travail*, had already been published at that time, and were being eagerly discussed.

and produced by Him, is a living being which develops and perpetually tends to resemble the eternal model from whose hands it has come ?

You declare yourself a Pantheist and a Sceptic. Allow me to tell you that it is you who are contradicting yourself, as it is impossible to be at the same time a Pantheist, who has a belief, and a Sceptic, who has none—unless, however, you call yourself a Pantheist provisionally, a Pantheist because the system is a bold and a beautiful one. If that is so, you are again mistaken ; the system is an ugly and narrow one, for it lops off all His attributes from the Being, and puts in the place of the perfect and absolute model a blind substance, ever reaching towards an infinite development, which it can only attain in the infinite, i.e. that it will never attain.

If I exhorted you to take up philosophy, it is not because I feared to see you become a bad man. Did you perchance take me for a monkish preacher ? Not at all ; but I know that, in order to keep up a true intimacy, similar opinions are necessary, and that two men whose convictions are absolutely antagonistic cannot be real friends.

Let us now look at my opinions and see whether my metaphysical researches are as ridiculous as you say. Here is something like what you tell me : " I know nothing of the principle or origin of this world, of which I am a part ; I have never seriously examined whether God exists or not ; I do not know whither this world is going, nor what is the end or destiny of the human race. I do not know whether I have a spiritual soul, or whether everything takes place within me mechanically by the effect of my organs ; I do not know what is Death, or whether I shall live beyond it.

All this does not worry me, and I will not even think about it. I have very passionate political opinions, and there is a party whose triumph I ardently desire, so much so that I would shoulder a gun to assist it. I want radical reforms in Society and in Government; I want the inauguration of the reign of Justice—and I do not know what is Society, what is a Government, what is Justice, what is Right. I rule my life after my own feelings, and I do not know whether I am right in acting thus. There is some one who was in the same state of uncertainty as I am, and who now says he has found a series of mathematical demonstrations on all these matters. This some one invites me to follow the same path as himself, and to study the science which has cured his doubts; but I despise this science. Without having thought two hours over it, I declare that all it is good for is to set a plate rotating on the point of a needle. I prefer the uncertainty of doubt to the repose of conviction. I want to live from instinct like an animal. I risk my life and I put myself in the way of taking the worst and most unfortunate decision. I close my eyes so as not to see, and, happy in my ignorance and indigence, I rail at the inept and ridiculous man who calls upon me to come out of it."

Tell me, my friend, do you call this consistent language? You had not come to that a month ago; you owned to me in confidence that you did not believe in M. Proud'hon, and that, if you read his writings, it was in order to look upon the flight of a powerful and logical mind and not to seek for convictions. You promised me that you would abstain until you entered the Philosophy class, and that you would then build a foundation for your doctrines. You

were an absolute sceptic and I was glad of it, for it is the best frame of mind in which to begin the study of metaphysics. What wasp has stung you since then? Whence came these materialistic convictions, this indifference towards truth? Do you not know that nothing is more vulgar than such a state of mind, and that such is the disposition of all those who do not feel that they have enough strength for seeking and for finding? Do you not esteem yourself more than to entrust your life to the hazards of a doubting opinion? And do you not know that Doubt—except Pascal's form of doubt—is cowardly?

Forgive me if I am harsh; I want to pull you together and see you yourself again. I repeat, it is not manly to speak as you do.

I am not answering your political opinions; they rest on no proof, and I accept nothing that is not demonstrated. Besides, you contradict yourself; did you not agree unreservedly with a treatise I showed you on the State and the Government? [1] it was absolutely contrary to what you are saying now, and in it I proved every assertion I made.

Farewell, and, once again, forgive the strong expressions I have used, as I have only been so outspoken because I love you and am sincerely attached to you.

I am classed second on the admission list, Libert first, and About third.

Yours.

[1] Marginal note by Hippolyte Taine, summing up this work:

1. The *origin* of the *State* is the aggregation of a certain number of men, presenting particular points of similarity, and placed in similar conditions of development.

2. The State becomes *formed* when the nation becomes conscious of its unity.

3. The State *is* a living, public personality, formed by the assemblage of a certain portion of the Being of all the individuals who exist within it.

4. The State has divers degrees of Being, according to the greater or less degree of their *ego* placed in common by the individuals. The Being of the State increases by the Law of Progress.

5. Government is the sensible and active realization of the State, which acquires a precise unit and a centre of action. It is the effect of the State.

6. Its action must be regulated and appropriate to the degree of Being of the public personality. Its duty is to maintain this appropriateness exactly. Its rights are the same as those of an individual, since it is the assemblage of several individuals.

7. These individuals, social and human units, have the same laws, and are formed gradually; the second from the first, and the third from the second.

Part II

THE ÉCOLE NORMALE

CHAPTER I

First Year—New Surroundings—Preparation for the Licentiate; Private Works—Correspondence

Hippolyte Taine entered the École Normale in November, 1848, with the brilliant batch of students of whom he was the head. There he met other most distinguished comrades, several of whom became his friends: Alfred Assollant, Challemel-Lacour, J. J. Weiss, E. Yung, Cardinal Perraud, etc., etc. In spite of the satisfaction of finding himself in a centre so exactly suited to him, the first months were not happy; he had a natural reserve which made it difficult for him to adapt himself to new surroundings. He had to become used once again to a boarder's life, to learn to know all those young men, so different in their natures and origins; he dared not discover himself to them and confide to them, as he did to Prévost-Paradol and to Planat, the fermentation of his ideas and the philosophical passion, or rather intoxication, which con-

sumed him. It will be seen from his letters that this moral solitude became a real suffering. On half-holidays he refreshed himself in the company of his two dear friends of the Lycée Bourbon. He had no other consolation, for he had had to resign himself to seeing his mother's house closed: Mme. Taine, having accomplished her maternal task, had returned to the Ardennes, whither she was called by other duties. In spite of her absence, the young Normalian used to spend many of his spare moments in the deserted flat at the Batignolles, in order to secure, together with so many sweet memories, some hours of solitude, during which he could concentrate his thoughts, an advantage which he missed so sorely at the École. However, he became accustomed to his new surroundings and to the somewhat noisy exuberance of his fellow-students, who, on the other hand, learnt to appreciate and to respect the great worker who won their affection by his modesty, gentleness and courtesy, and their admiration by his precocious erudition and unquestioned talent. Hippolyte Taine soon took an important part in the discussions of these eager youths; he loved ideas as passionately as others love pleasure. Those three years at the École Normale, so productive for his mind, became most precious memories to him, and were always considered by him as having been the best time in his life.

The École then had M. P. F. Dubois as Manager, and M. E. Vacherot as Director of Studies. This is as much as to say that Liberalism reigned there; nothing could be more favourable to the development of a mind so original and so conscientious as was that of young Taine. The *maîtres des conférences* for the first year students were, in

1848, M. Philippe Le Bas for Greek and Greek Literature, M. Gibon for Latin and Latin Literature, M. Jacquinot for French and French Literature, M. Wallon for History, M. Kastus for Philosophy, and M. Adler-Mesnard for German.

But, besides the work he was expected to do, Hippolyte Taine continued, as he had done at the Lycée, his private studies in Literature, History and Philosophy. In literature, he was chiefly working for the Licentiate-*ès-lettres* which he was to take in August; he was making numerous notes on Greek, Latin and French writers; he was writing a special study on Pascal's Rhetoric, and an excellent analysis of the chapters concerning the great Jansenist writer in Sainte-Beuve's *Port Royal*. He was completing the regular course of Ancient History by a History of the Eastern races of Egypt, India, Persia, and Judæa, by some analyses of Herodotus and of Creutzer's *Symbolique*, and by a work on Hebrew civilization and notes on primitive languages founded on an article by Ernest Renan.

As regards Philosophy, we find commentaries on Spinoza,[1] notes on the Object and Method of Philosophy, on Psychology, Consciousness, Thought in general, Reason, Exterior Perception, Induction, and Memory; analyses

[1] These notes, written in his copy of Spinoza, are sometimes refutations, as note B: "This is the weak point of the system (proposition 28). There is a double impossibility here. Motion, in Spinoza, lacks a cause. Aristotle's first Motor does not exist."—Note J: "Spinoza's fundamental error is that he destroys the world; he really engulfs it in God. His philosophy comes in the end to this proposition, that particular beings are distinct but in regard to the mind, and not in themselves."

on Hegel's Æsthetics, and finally on the Theory of Intelligence, dated from 1849. It is the earliest trace of the great work which for twenty years was the constant object of all his thoughts.

At the same time he assiduously attended M. Adler-Mesnard's lectures, and was learning German in order to read Goethe and Hegel in the original. His curiosity was attracted by every subject, and we see by the analysis of his readings that he was then studying Hobbes and Burdarch with the same eagerness as Creutzer, Pascal, or the Fathers of the Church. His less studious comrades looked upon him as upon a living encyclopædia, and marvelled at the depth and extent of his information.

The continuation of his letters to Prévost-Paradol will throw more light than any commentary upon the state of Hippolyte Taine's mind and his studies during that first year at the École Normale.

To Prévost-Paradol.

February 22, 1849.

My dear Prévost,—I have just had the greatest pleasure I had had for a long time; your letter, so affectionate, so full of confidences, has made me happy and has given me such a desire to talk with you that I will spend all this evening in writing to you. I have wished to do so for a long while, but I never have enough time, and then, I must tell you, I am always looking forward to next year. My dear fellow, do work at Greek and Latin, for my sake if not for your own. I do want you so! I feel this want more strongly every day, because at the Ecole I have no friend, either of the mind or of the heart; all this flow

of thoughts and feelings which surge in me, finding no overflow, runs out in all sorts of private writings, either serious, scientific and practical, or intimate, secret, confidential. Next year I shall tell you everything. You will find me aged and changed; new horizons have opened to me in science and in life; I am oppressed by deep sadness and great hopes. And yet, when I study myself, I find that neither my nature nor my convictions have altered; they have developed, that is all. You will find again the friend that you knew, but you will find new things in him. Until now, you have only seen what reigned in me exclusively, that is, the love of knowledge and a taste for exact science. Perhaps you will see a formed character, settled opinions on practical life, and what is called a determinate system of conduct and morality. Strange that a few months of solitary thought and of experience of men should cause the birth of a complete development in a soul hitherto unaware of it.

As to you, dear old fellow, I pity you and I do not understand you. You think your own state miserable; you feel that it is wretched to doubt, to seek, to give up your life to appearances and hazard, ever following glamour and attraction, devoting yourself to opinions which charm you, though you do not even know whether they are worthy of being supported. All this makes you suffer, and yet you relish your sufferings. They are no doubt very superior to that stupid and brutal belief in what is called vulgar instinct and to those uncertain and half fallacious opinions which are admitted as if they were axioms, and on which the crowd of fools rest and slumber in proud satisfaction. But you must go further, for this,

let me tell you, is wretchedness. As long as you are young and strong in mind, in body, in beliefs and in passions, you can remain in this state; your own ardour will support you and prevent you from falling into the deplorable languor of which suicide is the end. But when this ardour fails you, when it is burnt out, do you know what you will come to? I know it, for I have experienced it this year; amongst the innumerable occasions of disgust and discouragement which have assailed me, I should have succumbed if I had not had a belief resting on solid demonstration. Such a firm point as this was necessary to stay me from falling into the gulf which opens at the feet of every man nurtured in science and art when, for the first time, he perceives the World, Life, and that bleak wilderness of thirty or forty years which he may still have to go through before the final sleep comes. Happiness is impossible; calm is the supreme object of man, and it is unattainable to him who has not acquired immutable convictions. I have done so; I have, I say, and my convictions become firmer and more extensive every day. I believe that absolute, linked, and geometrical science is possible; I am working at it and have already advanced two or three well marked steps. Now, make up your mind seriously, and give me your hand next year. If geometry is indisputable, I shall *make* you believe; not with that vain, superficial belief which flits inconsistently above its object, but with that solid, perfect persuasion which is an absolute rest for the soul, which excludes all doubt and enchains the mind with links of iron.

What is it that persuades you that Truth is inaccessible?

Is it the fact that you have not found it? That is no proof. How can you renounce belief on so slight a foundation? It is method that you lack; I can feel it for myself. Things which were incomprehensible at first became clear when I applied my mind in the right way to understanding them. I am not speaking here of the common method with which one's ears are satiated during one's very first month of Philosophy. There is a much higher, clearer, surer method, that of Spinoza. So do not give up the hope of Truth, and wait, I beg of you, until we have worked together. You will see how really slight are the contradictions between philosophers which induce you to doubt, and how all those great minds are really agreed. Some one said that philosophy, like mathematics, had been renovated two or three times, but had never changed—and that is very true. There is a superior point of view from which we embrace the Whole of things and from which we easily unravel all difficulties. Two or three great men have touched it, and we should try and follow them. Take courage therefore, and be but a *provisional* sceptic.

I am jealous of your young friend. You have in him a confidant, almost a son; have you forgotten me for him? If you love him as much as you say, all the room in your soul must be filled up; he must suffice to you and you cannot miss me. Try to have a large heart and to love him as a pupil, whilst loving me as your friend—your old friend. For I must remind you of all my claims. Have we not together educated our two minds? Have we not together watched the course of our two intellects? Have we not the same grounding of ideas and sentiments? I feel towards

you something more yet; that something is sympathy, and, after you, there is but one person in my life for whom I have felt it. Why? It is because Friendship is like wedlock, and, as Plato said, it is but rarely that we meet the half from which we have been separated. And, shall I tell you? I count upon your future. I hope and believe that you will become somebody; you will have talent, and, if I wish that you should have a belief, it is in order to place your eloquence at the service of a Cause, and through the union of those two forces, to see you reach the very first rank. Your success makes me happy with a sort of paternal pride. Let me explain this word: having myself passed through the same intellectual changes, and being persuaded that there is progress and development in the movements of the mind, I believe I have already been wafted further forwards than you. Seated on the shore, I wait for you; I love to see you coming nearer; I expect to see you take the same route. It seems to me that I am old and experienced and that I interest myself, as an old man would, in those who are starting on the same voyage as I. Have you had a similar feeling?

You say you are ambitious. What do you yearn for? Glory? Power? What is your plan of life? Do you want to go into politics? Do write and tell me what your desire is. Formerly, it seems to me, you merely wished for a professorship in the country; you wished to give four hours of your time to the State every day, in exchange for a small salary, and to cultivate Horace's happy mediocrity, enjoying country rambles and the view of the woods and the skies, living alone, skimming various subjects, gathering glimpses of Beauty and Truth on your way,

and trying to soothe the unquiet activity of your soul by this life, at the same time restful and active.

Do you now wish the post of a journalist, for a political rôle, a life of disputes with Catholicism and pamphlets against the *bourgeoisie*? Give me your confidence. I am awaiting your next letter. For my part, a life of discussion bores me; it teaches one nothing, and nothing is gained by it but enmity and insults. It has ceased at the École as far as I am concerned. I have sworn not to discuss either politics or religion again, and I spend my spare time either in joking or in music.

Are you a psychologist? Have you acquired the talent of observing yourself and seeing yourself feel and act?

If, later on, you cannot acquire a belief, become an historian if not a philosopher. For my part, it is almost certain that I shall go in for Philosophy.

Write me a long letter and tell me about your friend and your philosophical readings. Have you been reading seriously at all?

Adieu.

To the same.

March 2, 1849.

My Friend,—I do not write to you from a sense of duty, I only just converse with you; I have found a spare moment every Thursday evening, which shall now be yours, if you will.

You talk to me of Plato and of Greece; that is indeed appealing to my sympathies, and I am happy to see you really Greek and classical: we both are that. Nothing

equals my pleasure and the serenity of my soul when I wander by myself in the morning in the great silent halls of the Museum, amongst all those forms, so living and so divine. First, I must talk to you about Aristophanes; rejoice, we shall read him together next year. You can have no idea of so much freedom, so much democratic immodesty, so much grandeur, elegance, beauty, and vivacity. Your Plato charms you because, amidst the most elevated thoughts, you see Love and Nudity. But you see but one corner of the picture. Aristophanes will raise the whole of the veil; you will see this mixture of poetry and impurity, of beauty and licentiousness. No real obscenity, though, nothing ignoble as in Shakespeare; the ignoble, the purely ugly, is modern. Grace and good taste, in Greece, accompany everything.

So you have become ambitious all of a sudden? My dear fellow, you will be unhappy. Everything that preachers and moralists have said on the imprudence of committing one's happiness to outward things is strictly true. You will be unhappy, and—what is worse—agitated, uncertain, and disturbed by conflicting desires, like a good ship deprived of ballast. Your talent will make you unhappy. Think over it. I have made up my mind, as you know; pleasure for me is not happiness; I have renounced it, I do not care about it any more; I use it to keep slumbering nature awake; it is a spur to urge me on to my object; nothing more. My object is the Good, or the Being, as we used to say in Metaphysics. That I may think much, and discover many new things, gaze upon and produce beautiful things, that I may have food for love, that is to say that I may have the friendship of persons estimable

in heart and mind, and in whom I may exist so as to duplicate my being; that I may render some service to other men through the profession I shall take up—such are my aspirations. If I have enough strength to persevere in this work, I shall obtain Calm, which is the mental health of man.

Calm! Do you understand what it is? It is the supreme good, for it is Action, regulated and made easy. Why, I *must* act so! My only desire is to improve myself, in order to be worth a little more every day, and able to look within myself without displeasure. Do you not know that such a retreat is necessary to man? that real life is so full of causes of disgust and suffering that we are ever seeking for a refuge from it? that the greater number of men are so bad, so despicable, and so stupid, that it is necessary to converse with one's self. Well, being a true Sybarite, I am going to sweep and garnish this inmost dwelling, and to set up in it some true ideas, some good intentions, and a few sincere affections. That is all; merely a home concern. I have no desire to career through the world with much noise and fine apparel, gaining glory and respect, and at the same time leaving my house unclean and unadorned; I do not like to return from shining halls to a dirty hut, and, before I try to appear handsome and well dressed, I shall endeavour to *be* so. Only one thing vexes me in all this: that is the insignificance of my own mind, and the immensity of genius and science which is necessary to build up the complete and geometrical knowledge of which I have spoken. It often happens to me to fall into a state of languid depression, during which I spend hours on my bed or in an armchair, in that sort

of mental prostration so dreary and oppressive, which you know.

Another cause of misery is that I love, or rather that I would love: I need it; I feel that life for Man is not complete without Love, and you know in what a broad sense I take this word Love—it is Affection of every kind. If I were romantic, if I were not accustomed to observe myself and to examine others, I should be like the ideals of whom novels are full, and I should fall into some fine amorous passion. I read, four days ago, M. de Lamartine's *Raphaël*, which consists in the description of a first love, and I was delighted; I felt: "that is indeed myself." But you need not fear, I will answer for myself without any difficulty. And why? Because I know what I want, I have none of those hazy ideas, that lack of reflection, which make of a beautiful and ordinary person a supreme example of perfection. It is because I aspire to something infinitely more exalted, that which is perfection to a philosopher. I know that it does not exist in the human race, and that if anything approaches it it is not Woman but Man, so that my ideal would be rather Friendship than Love. More: I have given it up; this calm sadness, this calculated discouragement which has taken hold of me as regards Thought is now seizing me in respect of Love. I do not hope. No reflecting man can hope. And then, this is what befalls me: in the face of this impossibility a great and melancholy feeling grips me; the sight of mutilated human nature, the necessity of only loving others and oneself by halves, this radical vice of the nature of Man, who, wounded in his innermost being, drags his incurable hurt along the road which Time opens to him—all this moves me like the sight of

ships in danger on the sea. Man suffers at the sight, and the peril of the sailors touches him ; but the sea is so grand, there is so much beauty and life in the movement of the waves, in the clouds, in the efforts of the men in their danger, that a sort of strange joy mingles with the first bitterness. Such are my feelings. That which reveals to me the fundamental imperfection of Man, and the unhappiness which is his real nature, is the knowledge of perfection and the sight of the logical and necessary concatenation of things. The view of that necessity and of that grand thing which we call Perfection is sweet; the sight of that which is the real life and the real nature of Man consoles me. The knowledge of what is true and what exists suffices to fill the soul and to smother the anguish which would follow acquaintance with misfortune. That is why I so love the things of Nature. A sky, even dull and foggy, bare leafless trees, the monotonous breath of the north wind, the aspect of a barren plain, the waving in the cold air of shining blades of grass . . . all this is beautiful and enchanting to me, and the country is perhaps the only thing which gives me a kind of complete satisfaction.

Not that I limit myself to these desires, I should not care to vegetate in some hole in the provinces : I shall try and make my way. But it is not because of a fever of ambition, only because I think each man's position should correspond to his value, and one ought not to be underrated. Now you know me pretty well as I am at present. Adieu.

To the same.

March 20, 1849.

My dear Prévost,—It is indeed for me to apologize! I ought to have answered you a week ago, and I have not been able to do so, having, like you, an accumulation of work of all kinds that I cannot get through. First, there are all the regular, official papers on Greek, Philosophy, History, Latin, and French; then preparation for my Licentiate, and the reading up of thirty or forty difficult authors that we shall have to discourse about; lastly, all my private studies in Literature, History, and Philosophy. All this is going on at once, and I always have a quantity of things in hand; I have drawn up a big plan of study, and I intend to work out a great part of it during these three years at the École; I shall complete it later on. I mean to be a philosopher; and, now that you understand the full sense of the word, you can see what a series of reflections and what a mass of knowledge are necessary to me. If I only wished to pass an examination or to accept a Professorship, I should not need to take much trouble; it would be sufficient to have a certain amount of reading and a strict adherence to doctrine, together with a complete ignorance of Modern Science and Philosophy. But, as I would rather drown myself than be reduced to mere pot-boiling—as I am studying for the sake of knowledge, and not merely in order to earn my living—I want my instruction to be complete. I am thus thrown into all kinds of research, and shall be obliged, when I leave the École, to study Social Science, Political Economy, and Physical Science. Life is long—this is the use I shall make of it;

but my private cogitations take up most of my time ; one must seek in order to understand—in order to believe in Philosophy one must go through it all for oneself, and repeat the same discoveries that others have made before you. You know this by experience, and if you are now adrift on your unfortunate scepticism, it is because you have looked upon philosophers as advocates or comedians ; as they all have great genius, they reason forcibly and convincingly, and present to you beautiful and poetical opinions. Hence you have admitted the most contrary systems, just as, when listening disinterestedly to rival speakers of great eloquence, we are swayed by each of them in turn and end by believing in neither. But, believe me, I would rather have your coldness, your disgust, your scepticism, and your ambition than your former blind, unreasoning, passionate, and inflexible convictions ; the result will be that you will not take life seriously, and that you will make it sweeter and more agreeable, until the day will come when you will tire of this floating and uncertain state, and will decide to seek for firm ground, and rest on it at last.

And let me tell you, you are nearer to me now than before : the property of Thought is to pacify the mind, and, by elevating it, to bestow on it Equanimity. That is what has befallen me ; like you, I have acquired great contempt for mankind, whilst preserving a great admiration for human nature. I consider men ridiculous, impotent, and passionate like children, stupid and vain, and especially silly in being full of prejudices. Whilst preserving the outward forms of politeness, I laugh to myself to see how ugly and idiotic they are. Is not that what you felt last

year? You used to tell me so, and I did not listen to you, for I was lost in the contemplation of Man in himself. I am now where you are, but I have kept my former opinions on human nature and my deep love for a thing so beautiful, so vast. These two feelings are by no means irreconcilable, for it is one more reason for looking down on men to see that, with such a perfect essence, they only succeed in being fools, frenzied lunatics, or knaves.

It follows that my love, drawing back from particular objects, tends towards general or ideal things, such as works of Art, Humanity as a whole, and especially Nature. I felt this more strongly yesterday than I have ever done. I was at the Jardin des Plantes, in a deserted corner, and I was gazing at a slope covered with young wild grasses in bloom; the sun shone through them, and I could see the inner life circulating in the slight tissues and raising the strong stalks; the wind blew and swayed all that harvest of thick growing blades, of a marvellous beauty and transparency. I felt my heart beating, and my whole soul throbbing with love for that great, strange, and beautiful Being which we call Nature. I loved her, I love her now, I felt and saw her everywhere: in the luminous sky, in the pure air, in that forest of living animated plants, and especially in the quick and uncertain breath of the Spring breezes. Oh! why was I not away from dusty Paris, away in the free and lonely country! Why do I love Nature so? Why, when I see her, am I moved like a lover in the presence of his mistress? Why am I filled with a calm and perfect joy? Are Nature and Man but one thing? Do they, at certain moments, return to the primitive and absolute unity from which, alas for them!

they have departed? For my part, I think Nature more beautiful than Woman; the rosy tints of the morning sky seem to me more delicate than the lovely colouring of the fairest cheek; the ripple of water running over rocks and weeds are to me as expressive as the changes of the most mobile countenance. What more shall I tell you? When I perceive a whole landscape, with its rivers, its woods, its hills and dales, its sounds and colourings, I feel the presence of a Being absolutely One and real; all that is One, and this infinite and accessible grandeur is the Supreme Beauty. There are some barbarians who see in all this but a spectacle, a phantasmagoria which God displays to amuse Mankind, a composite of matter and movement without forces of its own, without veritable reality—and they call themselves artists!!

Seriously, my dear fellow, can you live a political life, or what is called real life, when you have such thoughts before you? Can you love with your *whole* soul anything but those perfect things which Science and inward Thought reveal to us? And do you not feel that, when we give this love to a finite and real creature, we only give it in fancy, imagining that that being is perfect, and clothing it with all the excellence which we see in the Divine model? I do not know if the same process takes place in you as in me, but I confess that the infinite love which, like all men, I carry in the bottom of my heart, always finds itself arrested in its flight when directed towards finite realizations of the perfect Essence; I know not what unfortunate perspicacity shows me that they lack this or that, and that they therefore cannot become in every point an object of

love; I say the same of myself, and I feel that I, too, do not deserve to be completely loved.

I am confessing to you a crowd of thoughts and feelings that I should not dare tell any one else lest I be considered crazy. But with you I dare everything; tell me whether I am keeping within the bounds, not of common sense (I know I am not, and it does not afflict me), but within those of good sense (which is more serious). You are more capable than another of judging, since you do not believe in Philosophy and can look upon it without being dazzled. Besides, all this is explained in the chain of my doctrines, and one day, if you like, I will explain to you the meaning of the sort of practical Pantheism which I have set down in this letter.

Good-bye, take care of yourself, and write to me as long a letter as I have written to you.

To the same.

March 25, 1849.

Have you read Fourier? One might think that you were sending me an exposition of his system; I know it, I often meet a *phalansterian.*

Mind, I am not going to send you a refutation of Fourierism; that would require metaphysics, which you do not want, nor I, for I have a bad headache at this moment, and am incapable of serious thought—I am even going to take a few days' rest. I simply want to write to you something on the history of Philosophy, and on the precise point at which your mind has arrived; Thought has its laws, like Light and Heat, and its evolution can be traced beforehand.

There are three phases in Philosophy. You are in the first, and I wish with all my heart that you may pass on to the second to reach the third; let me explain what I mean by that.

The first philosophy is sensualistic, materialistic Philosophy, that of Lucretius, Thales, Fourier, Helvetius. Man looks upon this world without having yet turned his reflections inwards, without a clear sense of what is material and what is spiritual; he sees things through the common notions which come from Imagination. For him, Life, or the Being, is a subtle, somewhat fluid air, a something which is diffused all over the world, and which, combined in various ways, produces various organizations. The Good is enjoyment, perceptible emotion, or pleasure. This philosophy does not see much beyond the outward appearance of objects, and has at bottom no accurate and no clear notions; it is the immediate successor of the scepticism which springs from the disappearance of religious belief. That is as far as you have got, where I was eighteen months ago, and where the world was in the time of Lucretius and at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Now see how the mind emerges from that condition, and how you in your turn will emerge from it by means of Psychology and something analogous to Cartesianism; it is called the Subjective Philosophy of Self; Christianity is somewhere near it. Man, pondering within himself, and distinguishing Self from all the material objects which surround it, becomes conscious of his spirituality and enters an entirely new world. He then denies that he is Matter, he establishes an impassable wall between Spirit and Matter, to such an extent that he denies Will any

power of moving the body; in morals he lays down what is called the law of Duty, and likewise absolutely separates duty from pleasure. He concludes in favour of a God, like Descartes, from the ideas he discovers in himself; Religion falls, like Christianity, into pure Anthropomorphism, whilst in the first phase it was pure Naturalism. During this second stage ideas find expression of Merit and Demerit, of a God who is a Judge, of the Immortality of the Soul, etc. . . .

The last phase is that in which Man recognizes the radical unity of himself and all things, the fundamental oneness of Pleasure and Duty, of Liberty and Necessity. This is called the Philosophy of the Substance or of the Absolute. Spinoza is an admirable interpreter of it. This philosophy, starting from the very principle of things, explains everything, conciliates all contradictions, and gives supreme rest to the mind. It consists in true Metaphysics; the first is bad Physics, and the second Psychology.

This is a rough idea, a rapid sketch of the evolution of human thought; every man's aim is to attain for himself the object reached by Humanity as a whole. Therefore, my friend, if you believe me, practise psychology, study Descartes, distinguish the spiritual from the material, study Kant and the doctrine of compulsory duty; after a little time you will enter into that exalted and calm philosophy which is the last, the supreme philosophy, and to which I believe I am coming nearer every day.

I implore you, do not remain where you are now! Descartes, Malebranche, the Christians even, are superior to you at present; that is not creditable to you; hasten to equal them, so as to reach at last that conception of

Substance in which are reconciled the logical and the psychological, the spiritualistic and the materialistic points of view. It will give you the true notion of the Infinite and the Absolute; it will reconcile you to the notion of God, for God is not the idol of the Christians, nor your "electricity," He is above all that you imagine, all that you conceive, and knowledge of Him is the real salvation of the mind.

I have read *Raphaël*,[1] like you, and like you was much moved by it, for different reasons. Leaving aside its style and the absurdities of execution, the idea and spirit of the book, to my mind, are excellent. He has well understood Love. Love is a faculty and not a need; true Love is sufficient unto itself, and happy, like Thought, in its own activity; it is devoted, it is not monopolizing nor destructive, like sensual or covetous love; it does not aspire to make of the loved object a mere appendage of itself; it does not consider itself in what it feels and does for the loved object—but it lives in the object and thus duplicates its own existence. It is the perfect preservation of two personalities in the absolute union of two beings; it is not selfish or jealous; it suffers that the loved object should love others; it has but one object, which is to become more united and to make the loved one more perfect; it is like a sculptor, who, his eyes fixed on the ideal model, corrects and embellishes day by day his divine statues. It is not languid, dreamy, melancholy, tearful; it is strong, sensible, reasonable, courageous; it is not a passion, but an activity; Man is not possessed, mastered, diminished by it, but

[1] Lamartine's novel, which had recently been published.

strengthened, exalted, and made divine, as he is by the assiduous exercise of thought and of action.

Happy are those who can find in their lives a few features of such a love! But our misfortune is that the imperfection of all beings forces us to love them but partially, and that this hidden fire which might set light to such a conflagration, being scattered, burns itself out, or at least burns very low! Man is not born to live alone; the need of Friendship torments him without ceasing. I feel it here more than ever, alone; with no one to guide or encourage me I sometimes feel very miserable; your letters make me very happy, and console me much—do write often, I need it; but, especially, try and help me by keeping me straight, telling me, when it seems to you that I go wrong, what I should correct in my thoughts, in my way of looking upon life, in everything, in fact. I write to you with so much freedom, and we have been friends so long that you must know me as yourself. Think that I do the same for you; what is this philosophical propaganda that I am writing you if not a desire to correct what I believe to be fallacious in your opinions? Why, old friend, there is nobody to tell us the truth; hardly any one knows us—those who have seen us know us incompletely or judge of us from prejudice or from friendship; we ourselves can say nothing very certain about ourselves; with the best faith in the world, we see nothing, proximity blinds us. It is the least we can do that friends should be confessors to one another. What, without that, would be the use of friendship? We flatter our acquaintances, we do not speak to our enemies, we smile on men of the world, we speak aloud a purely conventional language; let us whisper

in the ear of our friends the language of good faith ; they are the only ones whom we know well enough to see that they have enough stomach to digest the rough and disagreeable dish of virile food which is called Truth. Goodbye: write to me on all four sides of the paper.

March 30, 1849.

I have been reading your letter over again, and I find a sentence which alarms me. You speak of publishing a paper[1] on your philosophical convictions.

Do you really contemplate this folly? You yourself admit me that your opinions seem to you but probable. And you, at nineteen, are going to bind down your whole life by a public writing, when you do not know whether, in a year or two, the evolution of your mind will not have thrown you into another school of thought? It is inexcusable temerity. You are playing with your future. Pray reflect, and think what a thing it is to appear in print.

I now come to my answer. I should have many things to say to you, but I will only touch upon two points:

1. In the first place, I will show you wherein our Philosophies differ. They are more divided than you think; in fact, they are absolutely so. Your unity[2] resembles the

[1] Extract from Prévost-Paradol's letters (edited by Octave Gréard): ". . . I am going to read Spinoza, who seems to be your master. . . . If I find nothing there to shake my opinion, I will hold to the doctrines contained in my last letter, and devote my life to them. . . . I am now correcting, completing and publishing the few pages I told you of; being resolved to place my existence at the service of a practical idea instead of consuming it entirely in a long and rough voyage towards a distant truth."

[2] Gréard, p. 146: "The radical unity of Man and of all things, the fundamental identity of Pleasure and Duty, of Liberty and

unity of envelopment and of indistinction in which each world lies when all the germs of which it is composed are confounded; mine resembles that harmonious unity which is that of the developed living world.

You attempt to conciliate, and you really destroy; you sacrifice moral law to the law of pleasure by stating that the duty of man is to satisfy the tendencies of his nature, which is pure sensualism and Fourierism. You destroy Freedom by Necessity in your theory that the principle of Man's actions is the great Fluid[1] permeating his physical being and putting his organs in motion according to the fixed laws of its own nature and the constitution of those organs; you destroy God and you put Elec-

Necessity, that is what I would have said if I could, like you, handle the divine language of Philosophy."

[1] Gréard, p. 143: "There is a Fluid which we designate by the diverse names of Light, Heat, Electricity, Magnetism, Galvanism, Attraction, diverse effects of one cause, varied names of that universal principle which is the life of the universe. . . . That is my universe. If God exists . . . that embarrasses me not at all, for this world, wholly material if you like, wherein Man is but the first of the creatures, seems to me in nowise unworthy of Him."

Ibid. p. 146: "If I dared to enter the arena with you, I should deny that what you call spiritual really represents anything to your mind. The word itself means Truth, Force, Electricity. . . . Does your thought traverse the world in less time than that great Fluid? Does it act on your body more quickly and by a more mysterious power than the great fluid on matter? Malebranche and the Cartesians cannot bring themselves to cause the will to act on the body: let them see the Fluid move mountains, and let them explain it. . . . Let us fear that this great quarrel of the material and the spiritual be but a misunderstanding. . . . The distinction renders inexplicable and inconceivable that Universal Life, that great Fluid, suspended between Matter and pure Spirit."

tricity in His place in Nature. I conclude therefrom that you had so slightly examined the nature of God, of Moral Law and of Freedom, that you were not convinced of their existence, and that you could easily sacrifice them to the creatures of your own imagination. That is why I have advised you, and still advise you, to read Kant on Moral Law, Descartes on the Existence of God, Maine de Biran and Victor Cousin on Freedom, in order to believe in them. For the present do not dream of reconciling opposite terms. To reconcile, you want contrary terms, in the existence of which you have an invincible faith; whereas you have now but one term; therefore what you have to do now is, with full conviction, to set up a second one.

Notice, in passing, that this law of the generation of systems, which you deride, is quite simple. It reduces itself to this: before reconciling and explaining opposite notions, which is the object of every science, state your opposite notions; since every opposition implies two terms, state the two terms.

Now, of those two terms, you have but one, that which is relative to naturalism, to the system of necessity, to materialism, to the doctrine of pleasure. Do you therefore seek the other, and postpone reading Spinoza.

Let us take your Fluid for an example. As it is neither dense nor tangible, you think you can make of it an intermediary between Matter and Spirit. You think that you have there the nucleus of things, but that is because you have but an incomplete idea of what is material or immaterial. Think, and you will perceive, as the physicists do, that you conceive it as being extended, composed of parts of elastic and constantly moving molecules. Will you

then dare to say that the fluid, or its movement, is your own thought?

You should therefore look for the differences and oppositions before looking for the Unity and the solutions. If you say that your fluid is not an assemblage or a continuity of parts, but a force, i.e. a whole, an active substance, how is it comprehensible that an non-extended being should give movement to Matter which can only be moved by contact?

My dear fellow, you are leaping over Science in order to avoid going into it; you say "I know" in order to dispense with research, and you look down with pity upon my studies because you do not feel the necessity for them.

Philosophy is as much a science as Geometry—the highest, the most luminous of sciences; but it is no courtezan, its favours are of great price and not given at once to all; a long probation and sincere love are necessary to deserve and obtain them.

That is why I shall not cease to exhort you to turn towards Philosophy and to become its faithful servant. I know no human joy, no earthly good worth what Philosophy can give, which is Truth, absolute, undoubted, eternal, universal Truth.

2. I must now justify myself.[1] You reproach me with

[1] Gréard, p. 149: "If you were another man, I should say that you prefer the quiet regions of an idle Philosophy. . . . But you are not of an age or of a character thus to sacrifice your beliefs to your peace; and what keeps you invincibly from such a compromise is that ardent and sincere love of Philosophical Truth which transports you and bursts out in every line of your letters. Don Juan had in him such a love for the Ideal Woman. . . . He died, exhausted with fatigue, consumed by his unsatisfied love. Who knows . . .

pursuing a chimera and neglecting what is important, i.e. Action, political Action, and Labour, which is useful to mankind.

Truth does not elude me, I hold the principle of it; I have not the universal explanation, but I have the principle of that explanation, and I advance every day in the knowledge of truth, without further doubt or drifting. I see, I believe, I know. I believe with all the might of my being; I cannot disbelieve, since all the logical, psychological, and metaphysical certainties unite to confirm me in the absolute certainty wherein I have found perfect rest. I cannot believe that my certainty deceives me, for now that I know the principle and the cause of error, the method I have followed has necessarily been calculated so as to avoid error; I cannot be driven from my belief by some contradiction with another belief, since mine is the only one which I admit and from which I derive all others —since its very nature is the reconciling of contraries— and in fine since all my researches on different subjects bring fresh corroboration to my earlier proofs.

Be assured that I value my life and happiness too much to entrust them to anything fragile. I have wished for something *more* than geometry, and I have obtained it.

I do not wish to throw myself yet into political life; I shall abstain, and you know why. It is because I will not

if the doctrine you are now embracing so fervently is not one of those imperfect images which deluded the hungry soul of Don Juan? . . . Your life would then have been nobly wasted in a pure research and a great delusion. But the time of leisure is past when Don Juans could without remorse thus consume their lives. . . . Each must now in his turn enter the great arena, to fight and endure till the end."

take an important step without knowing whether it is a good one; I will adopt no party without knowing whether it is in the right; I will defend no doctrine by my writings without being convinced that it is a rational one.

I must therefore first of all study the nature of Man, the duties, the rights, the future of the human race, and the direction in which it is advancing at this moment. A blind man should sit down, for in so doing he is at least sure of injuring nobody.

As for you, O strange man! you are so anxious to fight that you want to enlist before you know which is the right side; you are so desirous of coming away from philosophical uselessness and idleness that you are ready to run the risk of doing harm. Is that reasonable? And do you not feel that the greater and the more seductive your eloquence, the more likely you are to be harmful? What, then, will you be? A slave?—for I call a slave whoever acts through prejudice, passion, and party spirit, and does not obey the demonstrations of reason alone. Why, my friend, if you were a common man, a small or weak spirit, a man without courage and without love of truth, I should tell you to follow the stream, to abandon yourself to chance, to be like those numberless adventurers or fools from amongst whom parties are recruited. But you are not made to remain in that crowd, you will come away from it, and, since you are made to command and to govern, you must learn what is the true goal. Do you wish to be a mere war machine? And do you not feel with what bitter grief you may one day be overcome, when, after a battle, whether victorious or vanquished, standing amongst all the débris with which a political struggle will strew the ground, you

will doubt yourself, and wonder whether you have indeed served a good cause or whether all your efforts have resulted in harm to your country. That is a horrible doubt, and rather than be exposed to it I would prefer to abstain for ever from any sort of action. Do not retort that at that rate no one would ever act at all; the ignorant and brutal masses are guided by a blind instinct which carries a nation safely through every revolution. There is no middle course between the ignorance of the peasant, who votes according to the interest of his field and the custom of his village, and the science of the philosopher, who votes according to his metaphysical doctrines and his opinions on History. Between these two extreme limits rolls the contemptible crowd of dogmatical semi-scientists who combine the peasant's ignorance with the philosopher's confidence; from their ranks proceed all ambitious and dangerous men; they do all the harm, because, lacking both Instinct, which, though blind, is sure, and Science, which is infallible, they are without that which supports Society and guides Revolutions. Be reassured on my account, but do reassure me on yours: that ardour for action which I know so well is now making an effort to escape. You have but one means of controlling and containing it, which is to turn it towards the things of the mind. Pure speculation, which you look upon as so barren, is the principle of all things. Thought is the condition of development of all the human faculties, and without it there is no salvation. Do you count calm for nothing? I know what you are suffering; that sceptical agitation, that impetuous activity, that fever of ambitious, sensual, and political desires, do these make you happy? Can you live,

harbouring such guests? And when you have to arrange their places and allot to each its domain, do you not see that you must first of all light a beacon in your own soul?

I am always coming back to the same subject, my dear Prévost; forgive me and tell me truthfully whether I weary you. With my adoration for the truths of Reason, and my absolute confidence in the power of the intellect, I am like a Catholic who can speak of nothing but the Church and the Faith. But I, at least, can prove what I say, and no one can get out of reach of the doctrine of which I am possessed without at the same time placing himself entirely outside Reason.

If you knew what joy, what rest it is to know how far the soul extends beyond and above events, and how much it participates in the absolute nature of the Being! Listen to me, if only for the sake of your political opinions: all the discourses you are about to write on the Right of Property and of Association, on the nature of Government, on the Future of France, etc., all that will be weak and worthless if you do not soar to a higher plane. Do you want to treat political subjects as if they were matter for essay writing or oratory? But you are neither a phrase-monger nor a sceptic; on the contrary, you are a believer, and a believer after the Catholic fashion, without really seeing or knowing.

One of my old friends (M. Cornélis de Witt) has just returned from England, where he lived for two months in the intimacy of M. Guizot, with whom he was already acquainted. He has brought back some written counsels as to studies preparatory to political life. You should see how deep and how detailed those studies are!

If you persist in reading Spinoza, read it slowly and prudently. I am only half his disciple. I think he is mistaken concerning several fundamental questions.

To Mademoiselle Virginie Taine.

April 10, 1849.

I have just had five days holidays for Easter; the Director sent for me and himself offered me leave of absence. It was very kind, was it not? It seems that I have acquired at the École the reputation of a hard-worker and a philosopher, and the administration is crediting me with the profits in advance. I therefore spent those five days in the country with Uncle Alexandre, but unluckily cholera, or a sort of mild imitation of it, seized hold of me and laid me low during those five days. You can imagine how bored I was; I had just left at the École a life the most active, hard-working and productive possible; I felt as if I had descended into a cellar. And all my hopes of concerts and theatres! all ended in smoke!! Well, I am better to-day and I am writing to you from the École to which I have returned nearly cured. Almost every one in Paris is indisposed in the same way, so that I have not felt anxious. Do not be anxious either; I am in good health now, and I have paid the tax; cholera will not send its bailiffs to me again.

Do not display your taste for Art, Literature and Science; keep all those things to yourself; they would seem ridiculous to your present surroundings[1]; you would be thought enthusiastic and romantic. Write to me, and tell me about

[1] Mlle. Virginie Taine was at that time on a visit to some friends in the Ardennes.

your thoughts; I care not for news but for confidences. Tell me what are the words and sentences in *Bracebridge Hall* which you do not understand, and I will tell you their meaning.

To Prévost-Paradol.

April 18, 1849.

I have just read your letter; that is how I like you. Always write to me like that, abandoning yourself to your ideas or your feelings; is it not the best mark of friendship to write everything, without an effort at softening or disguising, without fear of offending or saddening?

I pity you, my poor friend, I could cure you and you will not let me! I shall continue to wish it, but I am afraid it will soon be too late. Politics will carry you away, you will enrol under a flag, and when you are living a life of action, how can you return to a life of Thought? The return path will be closed, perhaps it is so already! Is it not this ardour for politics and for action which prevents you from studying and seeking for light? Is he not already blind who denies the need for light?

What a misfortune, and how sorry I am!! What a waste! The more I read your letters over, the more saddened I feel. I see in them the most ardent soul, the most generous, most devoted heart, the gifts of Wit, Logic, Style, etc., everything that makes a most amiable, most capable, most estimable man. What is the good of it all? it merely makes you unhappy. See, my friend, how unhappy you already are, see how your ardour for action, your sensuous desires and your unreflecting eagerness wandering here and there without finding a resting-place,

weaken your body, your will, and your mind! You can have no hopes for the happiness of that friend of whom you speak; you were his master; you have gone with me into the depths of Scepticism, and we have brought back with us a drop of poisoned liquor, which will tarnish all our beliefs, and only find its antidote in absolute Science. You refuse the antidote; well, I assure you that the disease will follow you, and that, though you may try to ignore it, it will clutch you by the throat in the middle of your most passionate efforts in the service of your most cherished opinions. Do you not remember that we have carried Doubt to its extreme limits, that we have denied everything, Fatherland, Duty, Thought and Happiness, and that we have exulted in Destruction. Not with impunity can we feed upon such pabulum! it imparts too exalted a spirit to allow of being lured by the baits which captivate mankind. Unless you destroy yourself you will ever feel contempt for the coarse tribunes with whom you wish to ally yourself; you will feel within yourself Doubt concerning opinions founded on mere probabilities such as those which you describe. And, supposing you steep yourself altogether in those convictions, would not that be a yet greater misfortune? To lose sight of the light, to descend to the level of other men, to become a simple machine in the service of a personal passion or an alien opinion, lose Freedom, in fact—for the only Freedom is that of the mind —that would no longer be Life; I would sooner be dead.

When I think of what you are, I see everything in you, save the power of will. How much you have which I lack, and how willingly I would exchange my baggage for yours if, of all I possess, I could only keep the will to make use

of my new lot! Consider that I have never done anything save through strength of will and intelligence! my nature was poor and refractory, and I could only understand Art through my mind, and the Beautiful through philosophy and analysis. Your nature is a rich one, you have the nature of an artist and that of a speaker, besides that of a thinker, which is common to us both. Not one of the students I have ever met had such gifts or could feel with such depth. You can understand then how much I am attached to you, how much I should suffer in seeing you fall into error, misfortune or powerlessness, and what hopes I have founded on you! Do not overturn them! There are so few who *can*! Must it be that those who *can will* not?

I should be very happy if I knew what succour could reclaim you from the abyss into which you are sinking and where the ground is daily giving way under you. What can I do, if not give you myself for an example? for you will then believe me, you will not doubt my sincerity. Know therefore that I have the same causes for sadness that you have, greater even perhaps—that I have no one to understand them, either here or elsewhere, whilst you had two friends—that I suffer, that I work in loneliness—and yet that I am at peace. The serenity of the mind ultimately appeases the storms of the soul; the attitude to which it carries one allows of indifference and contempt without destroying sympathy and desire. What more can I add? For no doubt happiness is what you desire; you have it not, and I—not with the reasonings which you despise, but from experience, and with tangible proofs, I tell you where it is.

What more do you want? Why do you give no answer

to the prayers and arguments with which I fill my letters ? Am I to believe, like Spinoza, that "sometimes a passion clings to the soul of man with so much force that he is powerless to drive it away" ?

Forgive me for recurring to this so often ; you know my reasons well : it is because I love you, and I believe this love is of the best and strongest kind, since what I love in you is your excellent nature, which your weakness is vainly attempting to spoil. Do not believe that this affection can be altered by the difference in our opinions ; if I exhort you so much to come into my camp, merely on the strength of my word, it is less in order to enjoy the pleasure of our concord than to see you reach the point which you deserve to reach—I mean Truth. Moreover, you will never become bigoted in your doctrines. I tell you, you have Scepticism in your heart, and you will harbour this unfortunate guest until you consent to imitate me.

Do you not remember that walk we took together three months ago, your confessions and mine ? Oh ! Socialist, what were you then ? Did you not own to me that you were dogmatical with the vulgar, but that to me you acknowledged all your beliefs to be probabilities ?

How is it that those fragile shelters which you laughed at with me have suddenly become invincible edifices, capable of sheltering your whole life and of covering Humanity ? Do you not remember that you are going through a temporary phase ? Do you want to treat me like an N. For my part, I shall never look upon you as a Materialist or a Socialist ; I know what you are, and you will not delude me. *You are a Sceptic, and your present belief is merely provisional.*

I do not act thus with you; here I hold my peace, I hide myself; I conceal my faith, it would cause me to be mocked and persecuted; I work in silence, and, like a miner, I dig further and further, and fall into fresh pits. I will know, I shall believe! I know already and I believe! Ah! if you would! If you were reasonable enough to postpone your political life, to wait until you enter the École and come to work with me! I do not yet despair of it; you write to-day as one who is sick in body and mind. And why accuse me of being a speculative dreamer? Do you believe that I wish to devote my whole life to pure Science? Action will have its share, but in its proper time, and, when I know how to act, Social Philosophy will be for me a commentary and a corollary of the Philosophy of History and Metaphysic. Do you not know that that is how M. Proud'hon, the great Socialist, began, and that his *Bank for the People* is but the scientific conclusion from a demonstration?

One word more: it hurt you much to hear your young friend say, "Who knows but that on my death bed I shall ask for a priest?" With your plausible and vacillating opinions, are you sure that you will not do likewise? Do not laugh. M. Gratry, one of the most distinguished students of the Ecole Polytechnique, who obtained the prize for Philosophy at the Concours, and who for a long time was a passionate adept of St. Simon, has become a Catholic Priest. He is now our Chaplain.

It is terrible to think of, is it not? Dare you, after that, reject Philosophy, and refuse to seek its demonstrations? As long as that invincible breviary, the geometry of things, is not on your table, I will answer neither for you nor for

myself, nor for any one. Science is an anchor, for whoever has it not may drift towards breakers where he least expects to find them.

Farewell; write to me as much as you can. I will speak to you of my philosophy whenever you like. My God has nothing in common with the Executioner-God of Christianity, or the Man-God of philosophers of the second rank. He is the Absolute Positive, that is to say the one and complete realization of the whole being, and everything within Him and without Him is necessary as He is.

If this may attract you to my opinions, I will tell you that, like you, I believe in the legitimacy of passions and in the identity of the Laws of the World and the Laws of Humanity and of the Thought. But it is necessary that we should understand each other.

Have courage, and spare me a little of the affection which you had for the friend you lost.

As to the young man of whom you speak, the next time I see him I will take with me the written advice of M. Guizot.

To the same.

May 1, 1849.

My dear Friend,—Since you have decided to be printed alive, and do not answer my objections, I look upon you as fallen into final impenitence. Therefore, dear damned one, I accept you as such, and I am going to converse with you as if you had definitively gone to Hell—I mean, to Socialism.

You will show me your coming publication before giving it to the newspapers; I rely upon you to do so. You know that four eyes can see better than two, and that he who

did not compose the work sees more clearly, perhaps, than he who has dazzled himself by polishing it up in all its parts. I must tell you frankly beforehand that there is one fault I fear. You remember M. Baudrillart's address to young men? it was warm, well worked out, serious, but it was too rhetorical, too academical; too much care in its form and a too great desire to make it dramatic spoiled an excellent composition, and gave it the air of a schoolboy's work. I suspect from your letter that you run the same risk with your literary form, so scholarly and so animated, your alternate arguments from both sides, your assumption of the part of counsellor, your attempts at good style. I fear that your composition may be more suitable for the École Normale than for the Press. The Press demands less art, fewer ornaments; it requires either a scientifically logical or business-like style.

You must be careful of your first step, Did not I tell you that in your last work on M. Michelet there was something which still savoured of the class room? Those fine phrases after the manner of Rousseau, harmonious, rich, elegant, those long and happy inversions would seem out of place. In these times words are actions, and we do not want flowers on the points of bayonets. Take your flowers away if you can; take a less beautiful form, more abrupt, more striking, drier, less worthy of an artist, more worthy of a pamphleteer. Succeed you must; it will be my only consolation for your resolution. Instead of the silence you refuse me, give me victory.

You will forgive all this, I hope; you know that I tell you everything as freely as I tell myself, and I never love you more than when you do the same for me.

THE ÉCOLE NORMALE

I hardly had time to say a few words to you at our last meeting. Letters are short, and I have no time now to to make them long. Nevertheless, I want to converse with you about Politics.

I came of age a week ago, but I shall not vote, though I might. I find myself incapable of it, and this is why:

I have but two firm opinions in Politics: the first is that the right of property is absolute; I mean that Man may unreservedly appropriate things to himself, do what he likes with them, destroy them when he possesses them, leave them to his heirs, etc., that ownership is a right anterior to the State, like individual liberty; that Man possesses things absolutely and in their intrinsic value, not according to the value he has given them.

The second is that all the political rights of a citizen are reduced to one only, which is to consent to the existing form of government, either explicitly or tacitly, that consequently all forms of government are indifferent in themselves and borrow their legitimacy from the acquiescence of the nation. Beyond that I know nothing; I am therefore incapable of voting, for two reasons:

The first is that, in order to vote, I should have to know the condition of France, its ideas, manners and customs, opinions, and future, for the true government is that which is appropriate to the civilization of the people. I therefore lack a primary element for judging of the best actual government, I do not know what is suitable to France. Consequently, I cannot vote for the Republic or a Monarchy, neither for universal or restricted suffrage, for M. Guizot, M. Cavaignac nor M. Ledru Rollin.

The second is that, even if I knew what would be suitable

to France, I have too little knowledge of the merit, probity or opinions of the divers candidates to be able to choose between them. I have not been watching political life very long yet, and, from all I have read and seen, I have gathered but a chaos of contradictory judgments, which leave me in a state of complete doubt.

Therefore I abstain.

Passion, in default of Reason, cannot push me towards one of the two parties. To begin with, you know I never do anything from passion. Then I declare that both parties revolt and disgust me. They seem to me like a lot of wretched idiots, drunken and furious, who stir up shovelfuls of calumny and dirt, and throw them in each other's faces. My whole nature as a philosopher and an artist rises with disgust; I should be sick if I did not laugh with contempt. And I often wonder whether the *Peuple* is not a newspaper invented by the Reactionaries and the *Constitutionnel* bribed by Socialists.

I do feel that the one is the party of the present and the other the party of the future. But when I look at those two legions of vulgar fanatics tramping in the mire I see no good in either of them. I look for reasons amongst the arguments which they fling at each other, and I find but empty declarations and commonplace assertions. It is a war between those who want to keep everything for themselves and let the others starve, and those who try to rob others of what they have got. Therefore, leaving to themselves those who preach civil war, I go back to pure science, persuaded that there is some good in the present and in the future; in the present because it exists, in the future because it is to come. I intend to seek for

this good as soon as I can. I am studying for that purpose, pondering on Philosophy and History in order to attain social science, and trying to determine what is good and what is durable in our state of things, what should be altered, and what the future will bring.

I hold my peace and wait.

Good-bye, good health to you, you poor sufferer in body and in mind ! !

If you write to Planat, tell him I shall go and take him my answer on Thursday, about one o'clock. My letter would be too short, and I have too little time.

Farewell. Remember Paul Louis Courier.[1] *Non quæ sapiat, dictio, sed quæ feriat.*

To the same.

July 10, 1849.

My dear Prévost,—I have been a long time without writing, for two reasons. My mother came to Paris for a fortnight, and I have been spending my half-holidays with her. The rest of the week was taken up by preparation for the Licentiate. We are going up for the examination in a week. Ah ! my friend, what a grind ! ! How thoroughly sick I am of it all ! I am busy just now learning the dates of the births and deaths of various authors, and those of their works, in writing out analyses and accounts, in studying the texts from a grammatical point of view, in stuffing my brains with the sense of a quantity of words I did not know before, in a word in providing myself with all the wires with which to pull those old University marionettes. It is schoolboy work, and yet it is the subject of our first

[1] In English in the original.

year studies; if we are to believe M. Dubois, it is all we need trouble about. That is why we are overwhelmed with preparatory compositions, all of them lamentably done. We all worked together at our Greek exercises, interrupting each other now and then with barkings, mewings, and whinnyings, the class-room became a regular menagerie; it was the same thing for Philosophy. The questions are for the most part absurd. And now M. le Directeur sends us word that he is taking particular account of our compositions, and that he seeks in each the *moral and intellectual* (his own words!) qualities of each of us.

You are probably in the same trouble. How do Greek exercises, Latin verse, dissertations and discourses, silly rhetorical stuff, compare with the Politics that you love and the Philosophy which I study! Yet I wish you good cheer. It is a bitter drug to swallow, but you must swallow it, since teaching is your real career and your real resource, since a cloistered life alone can give you the time for thought and the knowledge which you want for your politics, and especially since you are the head of your family[1] and require a situation in order to be able to help your people.

Human life is in truth a strange thing. So much work, disgust, sadness and constraint, to end in what? in a state which will be similar. To repeat the same lectures every year, to live with boys or youths, to be narrowed within a fixed programme, unable to go more deeply into anything, or to hazard an opinion in a lesson, all for a meagre salary, such is the life of a Professor. And yet it is better than any other career. The military man is but an idle slave; the

[1] M. Prévost, senr., was old and infirm, and Anatole Prévost-Paradol had two sisters younger than himself.

judge, the notary, the advocate, the lawyer are overwhelmed with worry about small things, mercenary questions, miserable little private quarrels which refine the mind and narrow the heart. Commerce is just the same. A professor is at least free, save for eight hours a week; when he is teaching, he is engaged in things of the mind, exalted, and free from the littleness of practical life, and the rest of his time is his own. Happy are the rich, they are not subjected to this slavery which I shall have to impose on myself. They are not obliged to sell one quarter of their life to redeem the rest from poverty, and to enjoy the virile exercises of thought and action. Being obliged to sell myself, I have tried to sell as little of myself as I could. I shall try to live with the rest.

There are but there modes of living in this world: 1, Pure Thought or Philosophy; 2, Politics or Action, i.e. the putting into practice of Thought in the order of Truth; 3, Art, i.e. the putting into practice of Thought in the order of Beauty. How happy is the man who can from the start give himself up to one of these three!

We are all obliged to bargain, to compromise, to divide ourselves between God and the devil. "Quality," says La Bruyère, "sets a man on his way; it makes him gain thirty years."

You will think me rather an aristocrat. It is not according to popular tastes to hate those ordinary careers in which each man may have his share of usefulness to mankind. Alas, my dear friend, what would you have? The more I see of real life, the more I dislike it, the more it seems to me that the men who live it are belittled by their functions and habits, the more I wish for independence!

But my misfortune is that my desires are more exalted than my mind, I dislike myself as much as the others; I feel that I am, and shall ever be, small, quite small, and that however much an ungrateful soil be cultivated it can yield but what it contains. I therefore entertain a permanent and necessary sadness, and my only consolation is that the game will only last forty or fifty years at the most, and that at the end of it all is Rest, eternal sleep, I hope. The incidents on the road have not much importance when there is a good bed to be found at the inn.

Why does not your brochure come out?

To the same.

July 18, 1849.

I was looking for your letter. As I expected, the difficulties in the way of the extreme resolution which you propose[1] come from yourself only. I have nothing to say about that; one cannot change a man. Yet, I do not know whether you examine yourself rightly. You create a monster out of a condition which has nothing horrible in itself, and which I think you could bear without too great an effort of the will or too many wounds to your pride.

There is nothing shameful in helping boys with their preparation, in proving to them that their Professor at college knows nothing, in showing them what a quantity of work will be necessary before they can reach the point one has oneself reached. All depends on the way it is

[1] Prévost-Paradol had spoken of enlisting or else finding some mean clerkship if he failed to be admitted into the École Normale. He declared that nothing would induce him to accept a post as preparation master in the boarding-school that he was about to leave.

done; I have seen some preparation masters mocked because they had neither instruction, gravity nor intelligence; others, who had maintained their prestige and convinced the students of their own ignorance, led them like sheep. A preparation master may be a serf or a lord.

As to strength of will, you malign yourself. Why, old fellow, why should you, with your firm character, your inclination to opposition, be incapable of forming a strong decision? We have so often spoken of the pleasure of doing one's own will over and against all others that I thought you had experienced it. But let us put aside the question of will and merely calculate the advantages, the pleasure and usefulness of it. When once you are admitted to the École you have rest, a quiet life, solid instruction, great chances of improvement for your mind, and a means of rising in the world without the fear of all those troubles which arise from below and clutch us by the throat. It is, moreover, but the continuation of the perhaps rather disagreeable work, which you have been going through during the last two years; to give it up would be to lose what you have already gained. Finally, you might look upon the work as a task and a penance, and give up the rest of your time to philosophy and politics.

Now consider the other mode of life. No future, to begin with; a hole out of which you might painfully struggle with the help of your pen; all the troubles and disappointments of a literary career; powerful enemies; an insufficient education, whence a necessary weakness and not much chance of distinguishing yourself. For it is not enough to write well and to have original ideas. In order to become somebody you must have knowledge and an

experienced mind. Then it is certain that in the little situation that you wish for you would have more mechanical and unpleasant work than in your boarding-school. Do you like figures, copying, writing invoices and making up accounts better than reading Latin and studying Greek and grammar? Good heavens, even in those lowlands of literature you live with great authors and you learn Greek and Latin.

To sum up, on this side you will find less work perhaps, anyhow less disagreeable work, and infinitely better effects; the balance being thus established, the conclusion is clear enough.

Suckau is passing his Licentiate; I fear very much for him, not on account of his Latin, which I have about purged of its faults, but for his obscure and heavy style.

Why should you despair, you who write in a manner so original and so penetrating, whilst at the same time so rich and so sparkling?

I remember having seen some of your verses in the Rhetoric class, and some of your dissertations. Save a few glaring faults, how very far better they were than the platitudes with which unfortunate professors are usually sickened! I remember these lines, almost worthy of Lucretius in their abrupt force:

> Quumque hoc obscurum mare et arctum littore nullo
> Mortem, aliquis nostrum intravit sociosque reliquit.

You see, there are two degrees in Latin. The more advanced scholars seek elegance, conventional turns of phrases, rare words, in fact all that which is the flower of competition seasonings. The others—and you are one of

them—know the meaning of the simple and usual words, and, thinking simply, can write with sufficent force and correctness. Keep to that, and you will be able to write without making mistakes, because you will not have to unroll long-winded sentences or to build up complicated constructions.

I am competing to-day for Latin verse and Greek exercise; it is the hardest day. The subjects of our two dissertations were not too absurd:

"1. Quis unus sententiarum in historiis esse debeat.

"2. Up to what point were the ancients capable of writing about Universal History and to conceive its plan?"

To-morrow and the day after come the vivâ voce examinations, lasting one hour for each.

I am pleased with what you say about your pamphlet. Good luck to you; you will make your *début* in the world and in the École at the same time. May you be successful in both cases. I hope to be admitted to the *licence*, but do not fail to wish me good luck!

Is your preparation master capable of passing do you think?

To the same.

July 21, 1849.

MY POOR FRIEND,—I feel for your sorrow[1] with all my heart! but I should never have imagined that it would be so great. I thought you loved him for his mind, rejoicing in the sight of a noble nature growing and developing through you, and under your eyes. What is to be done for such grief? If you continue I shall find another

[1] Prévost-Paradol had lost a very dear friend.

Rousseau in you, his talent, his passions, perhaps, and especially his sorrows.

Alas, I have in vain done all I could to place you in the quiet refuge of solitary thought, and to communicate to you the calm which comes from a regular life, firm and patient love for Science, worship for Art and admiration for Nature. I have done everything to bring peace to your mind, you do everything to trouble it. May you be less unhappy than your nature seems to promise. May you at least, with so much misfortune, unfold all your talents and force and become great if not happy. If glory and power do not come to console you, as they have done for your master, I pity you. Perhaps also these long sorrowings, these anxieties, these tidal passions will increase your eloquence as they did his, and perhaps, like him, you will draw greatness from suffering.

I was like you when I was seeking for a friend and found you. I am the same as I was then, and I experience the same feelings as you do. I wanted some one to complete me, to have the qualities I lack and to do what I am incapable of doing. Human nature is so miserably imperfect that an assemblage must be made, of chosen men, in order to form from their aggregation a man really worthy of esteem and presenting the image of perfection. Judge of my sadness in seeing you thus suffering and consuming yourself, and forgive my constant claims, my exhortations to courage and that preaching tone so often recurring in my letters. I have a right over you; it is my property of which you rob me by letting it pine away. There is in you something which is mine, something which completes my nature, and which is as essential to me as

my own qualities. What a joy it would be for me to see this something grow and unfold itself as it is worthy to do! If you knew how rarely a witty mind and a noble heart are met with in this world you would have pity upon yourself, my dear fellow, and you would respect the sacred treasures within you. I have lived amongst students for ten years, I have found but you; perhaps there may be one young man here whose mind equals yours (as for his soul, I know it not), that is all. When I see the universal stupidity and impotence, the small vanities and small capacities which swarm in the world, the infinite prejudice and ignorance, and when I look back towards the two or three whom I truly esteem, I feel like a man who turns away with disgust from the wretched daubs impudently hung on the walls of the Museum and who hurries with loving ardour towards the two or three pictures by old masters which the new ones have not yet superseded.

Do write like that often and tell me your troubles. Reserved as you usually are, it will be a relief to you. To me it is the greatest mark of friendship.

Is there anything else which could rest you and soothe your soul? I hope there is; Plato and the country should be able to do so. If it is so, the first point is that you should wish to be cured. It will be easy to become a man again amidst all the sorrow and suffering. It is a sad thing to say, but we must count but upon ourselves in this world; friends fail us, disease robs us of them, absence returns them to us altered, politics alienate[1] them from us. Friendship is the sweetest thing in the world and

[1] And politics did indeed estrange these two friends in later life.

our only refuge in the uncertain and stormy life that we lead, but we must be able to live alone and so suffice unto ourselves. Man, when left alone, still has Study, Art, Nature, and especially the Infinite, which alone can exhaust that immense power of loving which is in his soul. Philosophy is indeed a great teacher of love; it is also a great teacher of resignation. When I suffer acutely, I consider the general movement of the world, and I forget the small unit that I am whilst thinking of the universe, or at least remembering that there is an end to it all, and that in thirty or forty years' time we shall all sleep. Adieu.

I am admitted second to my *licence*. E. de Suckau has passed.

To the same.

August 24, 1849.

MY DEAR PRÉVOST,—You are No. 38 in the qualifying exam. There are thirty-eight admissions in all.

It was with great difficulty that you obtained this poor place; a student overheard a violent dispute which took place concerning you, M. Vacherot supporting you and all the others attacking you.

M. Vacherot spoke to me about you to-day; he wishes you to come and see him to-morrow, Saturday, between 12 and 1 o'clock. He wants to talk about your past and present examinations. Beware. The management have heard that you had scribbled off all your papers in three hours; it was thought that you acted thus under the conviction that the examiners were bound to admit you on account of your "prix d'honneur."[1] This seemed to

[1] Prévost-Paradol had just received the Philosophy honours prize at the *Concours Général*.

indicate pride and arrogance, and told against you. There is the pity, my poor friend; we have to consider not only what is right in itself, but the judgment of others on whom we depend.

You are at a crisis in your life. The use you make of these two months will decide your future, and not only your profession, but your instruction and political and philosophical value. For, unless you come into this cloister, you will not study seriously. If you are a man you will understand that he who wishes for an end must accept the means, and that there is no better end for a man, no greater good, than positive knowledge and personal tranquillity. I swear it on my conscience, you must now choose between becoming a phrase-monger, a sophist, a penny-a-liner, an anxious, worried wretch, or an orator, a philosopher, a serious and cultured man, worthy of leading other men.

That is why you must, every day during these two months, write Greek and Latin translations and learn tables of dates and events. All this concerns you alone, and only appeals to your interests. But think also of what your friend begs of you, and of what you owe to your father. If you have not the courage to do what is best for your own sake, at least be generous enough to think of your family, and to remember that your good is as precious to me as my own.

Good-bye. I shall miss the post if I write more. To-morrow, when you come, we will have a talk.

To the same.

September 11, 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It is raining to-day; shall I take up our conversation where we left it twelve days ago?

I consider that you have a fallacious opinion on the principle of the rights of private individuals and of the State. You believe, like Rousseau, that the rights of individuals are mere conventions and that no such rights exist beyond those established by the will of the people.

Both you and M. Jacques are tyrants, my dear fellow. Your maxim justifies the tyranny of the mob, his that of a minority. You destroy the individual and he destroys the State.

In my view, every human act in general is a holy and sacred thing, that is to say that for no motive whatever must it be destroyed, or, in other words, prevented from taking place. The general rule of Morality is to do the greater good always, and to sacrifice the small to the great. But human acts are worth so much that they are absolutely inviolable, and may not legitimately be prevented or destroyed. This inviolability of human acts is the principle of what we call Right.

Do you admit this opinion, which is naught else than the affirmation of the inviolability of human liberty? If you reject it, I will send you a demonstration of it another time. To-day I will content myself with stating it.

It follows that the liberty of speaking, of writing, of printing, is a right; it follows that the life and property of each individual are inviolable and that he has a right to preserve them. Those rights, as you see, do not issue

from a convention between the members of the State (since we have established them without supposing the existence of the State) but simply from human nature, considered in itself.

Now, where do the State's rights come from? The State, I think you will readily grant, is a being, a real and living individual, and not an abstraction. If we consider in each individual what he has in common with all the others—I mean citizenship, affection for his country, that part of his existence which is absorbed in the common existence—we shall perceive one great being, composed of all the individuals of the State considered under a common aspect, and consequently undiscernable as individuals and forming an absolute unit.

It follows that, in a society, there is something beside the individuals, there is the State itself, and the existence of that new being does not destroy the real and independent existence of the individuals.

This being is human, since its elements are human. It is therefore in a condition exactly parallel to that of the individuals; its acts are equally inviolable, it possesses rights.

Those rights consist, like those of private individuals, in the legitimate power of preserving its existence and its property, which is the extension of its existence, as is the case with individuals. In other words, inasmuch as it is expressed by a Government, it has the right of preserving itself against enemies from without or from within, to prevent what might harm it, etc. . . . to raise taxes (since it is a co-owner with each individual), etc. . : .

You see that the rights of the State, like those of private

persons, flow from the very nature of things, and that the former are not the mainspring of the others. Rights are ever the outcome of Existence; the State, as a distinct being, has its distinct rights like those of private persons. They are two adjacent but distinct domains.

For instance, the majority has the right of taking the form of Government that it chooses, and this is because this act is an act of the State as such, i.e. of the mass of the nation considered as a unit. I, as an individual, who know of a better form, have nothing to say; I have no right to force the State, to impose upon it a better government, any more than I have a right to coerce my private neighbour in order to teach him how to manage his farm. The State is free. I have withal a right to preserve my property (apart from the question of taxes). The State may not confiscate it, it would be a violation of my liberty. As the inviolability of my property is constituted by its nature and not by delegation from the State, the State cannot take it away from me. I am free. My acts are inviolable in the same right as those of the State.

I will now sum up in two words: the human act, the human existence, is inviolable. Now, the State and the individual each are a human existence. Therefore both the act or existence of the State, and that of the individual are inviolable. Hence it follows that they each have independent rights, the existence of each being a distinct thing.

I will not detail to you the advantages of this theory; it consecrates the freedom of the State and of individuals; it preserves us from the excesses of Communism towards which you lean, and from the absurdities of individualism into which you say that M. Jacques has fallen.

Answer the above if you can and if you will. Tell me also what you are doing, if you are still suffering from that anxiety in which I found you, if you are studying Greek and History and getting on with them, and if, failing the École, you have some perch in view where you can rest your wings.

As for me, I am at Vouziers (Ardennes). I ramble about in the country all the afternoon; in the morning I read Greek and German, I strum on the piano, sleep much and think little.

Dear friend, the delights of Society and those pleasures which seem to satisfy most other men bore me more every day. I hardly believe in pleasure at all now; I still understand a certain thrill of the nerves, but that also is losing my esteem day by day. There is but one good thing in this world, which is rest for the soul and activity of the mind. That is why I write to you about politics and philosophy. Would it be worth while to recount all sorts of little things which happen to me and which make up the web of my every-day life? I myself even hardly find any pleasure in studying the natural history of my soul. Speaking truthfully, nothing is good but the knowledge of absolute truths. O, that I may discover some, I who mean to be a philosopher! May you, who are a politician, apply them. The rest is a farce.

To the same.

September 25, 1849.

You are a wretch, a lazy wretch, and fit for the gallows. What! as soon as I arrive in the Ardennes, I make you the object of my first care, my first love, and I wait for

three weeks for an answer? Am I then to woo you like a young beauty, and invite you three or four times before obtaining a word in answer?

I have some suspicion of the cause of your laziness: *obliviosus amor*, as Horace has it. Your new friend is making you forget your old ones; your long walks in the Tuileries, your mutual confidences, drive the unfortunate exile from your mind. I saw that as I came down your staircase; I am not like him εὔζωνος, εὐπρόσωπος, εὔκνημις, etc., and all the εὐ you like. But, my dear friend, remember that Socrates, who, like you, was fond of handsome youths, did not disdain the more or less ill-favoured wretches who attached themselves to him and sought his conversation. I am now seeking and soliciting yours. Will you grant it to me? Do not prepare yourself in advance too thoroughly for the part of Cabinet Minister to which Politics are to lead you; grant audiences to those that seek them; if not, Proud'hon take thee! go to the devil!

It is true that your silence is partly my fault; I have done what you reproach Planat with doing, sending you a letter of philosophical polemics with a request for an answer. I must seem to you a sort of fighting-cock, ever looking about him and calling for adversaries. Forgive my mania, my dear fellow, as well as my last denunciation on the vanity of human occupations; I know well that you are slow to ransack your mind and that you prefer to leave your gold mines untouched rather than draw supplies from them; but I did hope that during two weeks' holidays you might find a few hours of thought and leisure, and that at least the boredom and listlessness of holiday-time would incline you to examine the question.

To tell the truth, I still have hopes, and you would give me great pleasure if you told me what you think of the views which I have sent you. . . .

Do you not blush to remain thus indifferent and to keep from me what is taking place in your mind? Upon my word, I sometimes think that you should have been born a theatrical manager or a Sultan; in this last post especially you would have done wonders! It is an easy and at the same time virile occupation. Remember that your Lord Byron says, speaking of the education preparatory to this function, that at the age of twenty the young Sultans are taken to the throne or to the gallows, being in consequence:

"Exactly fit for both."

That is my wish for you, my brother.

Seriously, do answer me, and tell me about your studies: your Greek, your History, your plans for the future if you do not pass for the École.

How can a friendship be kept up if one does not know what is passing in one's friend's mind? In two months' time the estrangement comes. Courage! Write soon and tell me everything.

Farewell.

To the same.

October 1, 1849.

MY DEAR FELLOW,—Your letter sets me thinking about your relations with Planat and about mine with you. Let us talk of Planat first.

Be kind to him. He has an artistic and systematic nature; when he has an idea, he drives it in, meaning for

the best, and unconscious that he is shocking others. For instance, this time, he had conceived a certain ideal of friendship, and, seeing that you did not respond to it and that you offered him a medium sort of friendship, he thought that you offered him nothing at all. Everything or nothing, that is his motto; further, as he understands no other sort of conversation but serious, active talk, he could not bear your *laziness* and thought that you did not want to talk to him. It all comes from an excessive and absolute nature. Forgive him, for he is made that way, and cannot help himself. Really, you know, he is fond of you and esteems you highly. He has spoken to me of this affair, and, if his letter is irritating, it is quite involuntarily so. Do not answer harshly; when the heat of his excitement has cooled down he will understand that we cannot model our friends after our fancy, and that we must accept them as they are. He will have me to philosophize with and you to converse with; I am quite sure that he is much attached to you.

Now for us two. I must often have deserved the reproaches you address to him. I, too, hammer away at my ideas; do you remember my philosophical preaching of last winter?

Poor old fellow, you were very patient with me! What would you have? Man is so made that he attempts to impose on every one his own way of thinking and mode of living. Besides, I have a particular excuse, which is the absolute persuasion in which I was then and am still, that my ideas are true, and that my system of conduct is the only one a man should follow. . . . I was like an ardent neophyte, a sort of *Polyeucte*, urging you to conversion

and martyrdom, whilst you, my dear *Pauline*, did your part very well. Our letters were a sort of dialogue, similar to this :—

[1]*Pauline* : Tu préfères le monde à l'amour de Pauline.
Polyeucte : Vous préférez le monde à la bonté divine.
Pauline : Imaginations !
Polyeucte : Célestes vérités !
Pauline : Etrange aveuglement !
Polyeucte : Immortelles clartés !

Briefly, I now think that Pauline was most kind and forbearing in not boxing my ears. So do not box Planat's.

I am calmer now, and, while preserving my convictions, I see that we must take people as they are. I should like to see you philosophizing, clearing your ideas, working your brain actively ; I have done all I could to induce you to do so ; you would be the happier for it, and I also. I have not been successful, so much the worse ; your nature is evidently not made that way ; as a circle has not the properties of a square, your nature, metaphysically speaking, has but those properties which are contained in its essence or definition.

I must resign myself ; you will be an orator, and not a philosopher. The properties contained in your essence are still very good, very beautiful, the best and most beautiful I know, and I shall continue to love them if you will let me. I was like the child who was asked whether he would have cake or jam, and who wanted cake *and* jam, crying because he could only have one or the other. Now that I am grown up, I can eat my cake without jam, and I advise you, my dear friend, to do the same concern-

[1] *Polyeucte* (Corneille), Act IV. sc. iii.

ing me. Therefore: 1, You have forgiven my letter (the one before last), my unfortunate efforts to set you thinking on politics and to drag you into them by the ears against your will; 2, you will forgive in the future all similar blunders that I may commit, for the flesh is weak, and from my essence, or philosophical concept, as from a vessel which is too full, scientific whiffs might escape, from time to time, which would be disagreeable to such a poetical and oratorical nose as yours.

Moreover, in similar occurrences, you will recall me to reason, as one would rally a student who had failed in a black-board demonstration through having omitted to consider one of the data of the question. The datum in this case is your nature. Such is the treaty which I propose to you and which I advise you to make with Planat. It would be a fine thing if a circle became angry with the square because all the parts of the square are not at an equal distance from the centre, and if the square were to excommunicate the triangle because the triangle has not four sides! We three represent the circle, the square and the triangle. Let us live in concord, and, in virtue of the very difference of our natures, new properties will be born of our union.

It is of course understood that, if ever, finding that your mode of living made you unhappy, and seeing me happy in mine, you inclined towards my views, I reserve to myself the right of encouraging you, and vice versâ.

In faith of which I here sign myself

H. TAINE.

If you were a Christian, my poor friend, I would send

you a chapter of the *Imitation* to console you for M. Bellaguet [1] and your own fears. If you were a philosopher I would send you the fifth part of the *Ethics*; as you are a poet, a Platonician, a Greek, I send you a little piece by Anacreon :—

THE PASSER-BY.—Whence com'st thou, sweet Dove? Why all those perfumes
Exhaled and distill'd from thy wings in thy flight thro' the air?
To what place, with what object thy course?

THE DOVE.—'Tis Anacreon who to Bathyllus hath sent me
His love, and the master and king of all hearts.
For a short song of praise fair Venus hath sold me,
As thou seest, I now serve Anacreon, bearing his letters.
He says he will soon set me free;
Yet were he to free me, I still would abide
As his slave at his side,
For why should I fly over mountains and fields,
With but trees for my rest and wild berries my food?
I now feed on bread from Anacreon's hand,
He gives me the wine he has tasted,
And when I have sipped it, I hover around him,
From the heat of the sun with my wings I protect him.
When I sleep it is on his own lyre I rest.
You know all; now away.
Man, a chatterer, e'en as the crow, hast thou made me.

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[1] M. Bellaguet was the head of a well known boarding-school. Prévost-Paradol boarded with him, and attended the classes of the Bourbon lycée.

CHAPTER II

Second Year—Life in the École—the Reaction of 1850—Private Meetings—Philosophy,—Dogmatism—Preparation for the Philosophy *Agrégation*[1]—Sketch of a History of Philosophy

No letters have been preserved that were written by M. Taine between October 1849 and October 1850. His mother and sisters were again in Paris. Planat, one of his intimate friends, did not keep his letters. As for Prévost-Paradol, he was received into the École Normale, and his friend's ardent wish was fulfilled. Correspondence was now replaced by daily conversations, and a happy, intimate intercourse, to which Edouard de Suckau was soon admitted; a delicate, well-bred man, enamoured, like his two friends, of general ideas and exalted philosophical speculations, he entered into a close friendship with Hippolyte Taine, broken only by his death in 1867.

[1] *Agrégation.* An annual competition for recruiting Professors for Faculties and secondary schools or lyceés. A candidate for the *agrégation des lycées* must have passed his *licence* examination and a candidate for the Superior *Agrégation* must be in possession of his doctorate.

Small groups soon formed amongst this crowd of studious youths, gradually brought together by similarities of tastes and talents. Hippolyte Taine, who was a passable pianist and passionately fond of music, had met among his companions a violinist, M. Rieder, and a violoncellist, M. Quinot, with whom he played Mozart's and Beethoven's trios. He found another sort of relaxation in the sparkling conversation of Edmond About; the future novelist's inexhaustible wit and brilliant flights of fancy contrasted with his own purely speculative absorption, and he bore with the best grace in the world the humorous teasing he was subjected to, both from About and from Francisque Sarcey.

He also sought the society of some of his graver fellow-students, such as G. A. Heinrich, Barnave (the future abbé), and Cambier (who became a missionary and died in China in 1866); he discussed with them subjects of theology and ecclesiastical history, which at that time had a large share in his studies and writings. He also saw much of the students in the Science section, and had long talks with the young physician of the École, Dr. Noël Gueneau de Mussy, being already attracted towards the physiological researches which afterwards became the basis of his psychology. Every subject, whether literary, philosophical, religious, scientific, historical, political or social, was tackled in turn by those independent young minds. The École Normale seemed a privileged place, a sort of intellectual oasis which the reaction of 1850 could not reach. However, a threatening peal was sounded towards the end of the school year. M. P. F. Dubois, founder of the *Globe*, who was suspected of liberalism, was superseded

in the management of the École by M. Michelle, rector of Besançon, who was not a former Normalien and knew not the traditions of the house. Shortly before this, M. Emile Deschanel, who was M. Havet's assistant in the teaching of Greek language and literature, had been called before the Superior Council of Public Instruction à propos of an article published in the *Liberté de Penser* and entitled "Catholicism and Socialism"; he was suspended from his functions, and M. Havet had to dispense with his services. A veiled hostility was also evinced against M. Vacherot, the eminent Director of Studies, and some of the most distinguished professors, such as M. Jules Simon, in spite of the reserve which they brought into their teaching, and the caution which they constantly recommended to their pupils. M. Jules Simon wrote in 1851, concerning H. Taine: "I found him following a current of opinion of which I cannot approve. . . . I had to struggle with him during several months; at last I have persuaded him to show the greatest docility on every hand." Nevertheless, these professors were held in suspicion and their names inscribed on lists for future proscription.

Hippolyte Taine, wrapped up in his work and in his beloved Philosophy, continued his studies without troubling himself about the storm which was about to break over the University, and of which he was himself to be a victim. In 1849–1850 he was studying the History of Philosophy as far as Leibnitz with M. Saisset, the History of the Middle Ages with M. C. A. D. Filon, French Literature with M. Gérusez, Latin Literature with M. Berger, Greek Literature with MM. Deschanel and Havet. Be-

sides his notes on those classes, M. Taine preserved a great many of his private writings of that time. Already during the holidays, he had written some notes, dated August 1849 (see Appendix I.), which are an epitome of his philosophical work during his first year at the École; others, forming a sequel, are dated November 1849, and March 1850. These notes, which bear the following titles: *Of the Being*, *Of Thought*, *Ideas on Science*, and *On the Absolute*, mark an interesting step in the evolution of his mind.

They are pure abstraction, and it is obvious that he was then still imbued with Descartes' and Spinoza's doctrines; but the effort to extract a personal doctrine and to inaugurate new methods is apparent.

For instance, he writes in November 1849, referring to the work done in the summer: "This is pure idealism; I had not yet made a distinction between perceiving and conceiving." Another paper, written a little later, but also dated 1849–1850, and entitled *Philosophy, Dogmatism*, contains at the beginning the following remark: "I perceive that I shall have to re-cast the essay in which I summed up all my last year's work; it is like the task of Penelope. Every day I have to climb on my own shoulders!!"

This second work opens thus: "Everything depends on Method; I am therefore coming back to it. By Method, I mean the means of having true perceptions; in other words, the necessary conditions for having a succession of true perceptions. By the truth of a perception, I mean its suitability to its subject; I mean that it should be subjectively what the object is in itself.

"Every act of the intelligence, every knowledge, is a perception. Memory is the perception of a present modification which implies anterior perception. Conception is the perception of a similar modification which does not relate to a past perception." . . .And further: "Man (the subject and author of Science), is movable, but the object of Science will be immovable. It is the Ego which makes Science, but it builds on the Absolute. . . .

"Is there not a contradiction in all this, and, if so, how can it be solved? I have been trying in vain since last night. . . .

"We must take care not to fall into the defects with which we reproach the experimental method. Science, we say, must only contain assertions which are eternally true. The two fundamental conditions are to perceive everything under the character of necessity and to exclude all possibility of error. . . .

"Before reading Aristotle's *Analytics* I want to clear my ideas on the subject a little. . . .

"*Theory of Science.*—Aristotle begins by stating the conclusion, and then seeks for the minor and the major terms. We first state the notions, and then look for the conclusion.

". . . Prove that the nature of the Being (as an essence) implies manifestation . . .

"But how do you unite the express manifestation to the non-express manifestation? Should not a medium term be inserted between those two forms of manifestation? And will not a Cause be necessary to make the manifestation pass from the state of Power to the state of Act?

"This question is overwhelming, but I do not despair of solving it."

Thus, in this work, through his doubts and the sudden turns of his thought, do we see the Idea freed by degrees under a steady effort. After a long discussion on the Absolute, he exclaims: "Here is an immense step already; the demonstration remains to be effected." And further: "If the nature of the Being as a Being in any one of its parts is manifested, the whole Being is manifested. For, if the essence is manifested, it is the result of the nature of the Absolute, which is at the same time essence and manifestation, and prevents the one from going without the other. And thus becomes known the nature of the Absolute, which is the union of the two.

"Now the problem is solved.

"I only want now to account to myself for that inductive process, and to know whether it is but a form of deduction.

"I therefore return to Descartes' point of view and method of meditation. I have by degrees perfected and completed my idea of the Absolute, and I see that in order to legitimize and verify it I must go back to Perception and to the reasoning which gives it to me.

"I must prove that Induction does not only give me Schelling's Infinite-finite, or Hegel's Idea in Notion, or Aristôtle's Idea in Act; but the (absolute) Being (absolutely) manifested.

"I will define all my terms in order to progress more surely. To define a Being is to name the term immediately anterior, and to circumscribe within that term the

quantity of reality which is that of the Being in question . . etc.

"Given two natures, both simple as such, and having such a relation to each other that B, the second one, can only be conceived by the first A, but that A can be conceived without B.

"It is not only because A and B are in relation that B is plural, it is because A is anterior and necessarily in the concept of B.

"I have it now; but curse the problem, it is so difficult!!"

The preparation for the *Agrégation* begins at the École with the second year. Hippolyte Taine had chosen philosophy for his subject, and plunged into it with ardour. Most of his analyses of different authors have been kept, almost always accompanied by expressions of personal opinion; there is no space here for more than an enumeration of the various subjects:—

The minor Greek philosophers, the philosophers of Alexandria, Plato, Aristotle's *Physics*, *Treatise on the Soul*, *Early Analytics*, *Metaphysics*, a comparison between the Logic at Port Royal and that of Aristotle; analyses of Descartes, Malebranche, Schelling, one of M. Hauréau's Scholastic Philosophy which concludes thus: "M. Hauréau's book only treats of one question, that of the Realists and the Nominalists. In order to see the movement of Ideas, theology should have been studied, and the action of Philosophy on Theology. . . . Scholastic Philosophy is not; dogma smothers and strains it. . . .

"Christianity has weighed down most of the Schools and made them inconsistent: 1, Abelard's School;

2, St. Thomas, Duns Scotus, Occam; 3, Cartesian School; 4, Eighteenth Century—by reaction; 5, Our French School. The real Descartes is Spinoza. The real Sensualists are the Positivists."

A certain number of dissertations and analyses have also been found on the Pythagorean School, Plato, Parmenides, Lucretius, Xenophon, and Aristotle; on Horace's Philosophy, and on the proofs of the existence of God in Descartes' Meditations. He gave addresses on the Pyrrhonian School and on Bacon's philosophy.[1]

He completed his studies on Philosophy properly so called by researches on the Christian dogma. He read the New Testament in the Greek text; he analyzed the Fathers of the Greek Church, the Sixteenth Book of the Theodosian Code, Sozomenes, Tertullian, Minutius, Felix, St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, Procopius, the three first volumes of Fleury's *Ecclesiastical History*, Gieseler etc. . . .

Though the regulations dispensed with his attending the History and Literature classes, he submitted to the professors dissertations on the Council of Trent, on the historical meaning of the *Divina Commedia*, a comparison between Homer and Virgil; he wrote notes on Ampère's *Introduction to the History of French Literature in the Middle Ages*, and filled his writings on history and literature with an abundance of quotations which bear witness to the extent of his reading.

[1] "M. Taine shewed in those two expositions a quite remarkable penetration of mind and suppleness and ease of speech. M. Taine has a serious vocation and marked aptitudes for philosophical studies."—From M. Saisset's reports, kindly communicated by M. Gabriel Monod, author of *Renan, Taine and Michelet.*

To complete his German studies, besides the classical poets and prose writers, he read and commented on the Nibelungen, Luther's Memoirs and Writings, Mme. de Staël's *Allemagne*, etc. Lastly, in July 1850, at the close of the school-year, he began the sketch of a History of Philosophy[1] which was a sort of epitome of his studies, and on which he worked during the vacation.

[1] See Appendix II.

CHAPTER III

Third Year: *Agrégation* Preparation continued —Professors' Reports—Failure to pass the *Agrégation* Examination—Causes of that Failure—Letter from Prévost-Paradol to M. Gréard—Prévost-Paradol's Article in the *Liberté de Penser* —Letters from MM. Jules Simon and Vacherot

H. TAINE's last year at the École Normale was almost exclusively given up to preparation for the Philosophy *agrégation*, under the direction of MM. Jules Simon and Saisset, *maîtres des conférences*.[1] The notes he took on the third year classes are briefer than those of the preceding years. The young philosopher reserved his time for private study and writings, but his analyses and dissertations were very remarkable. M. Saisset wrote at the end of the third term: "M. Taine is the one of the three students of my class (Taine, Cambier, and E. de Suckau) who has taken the first rank and has, so to say, given an impulse to all our work."

The principal subjects which he treated are: *Real Method, Substance,* Descartes' *Theory on the Cause of*

[1] See page 17, note 1.

Error; The Origin of the Idea and Principle of the Substance, The Notion of the Absolute, Liberty, Condillac's *Treatise of the Sensations, The Idea of Time,* Helvetius' *Moral Doctrine,* Adam Smith's *Psychological Doctrine, The Moral System of the Stoïcs, Plato's Republic, Aristotle's Moral System, Memory, The Act of Consciousness in Psychological Observation, Exterior Perception,* etc. . . .

He analysed and discussed for himself[1] the doctrines contained in Descartes' Meditations, in the writings of Reid, Maine de Biran, Victor Cousin, Locke, Leibnitz, Bacon, Kant (*Criticism of Pure Reason*), Montaigne's philosophy, Aristotle's second *Analytics,* Bossuet's *Knowledge of God and of Self,* Plato's *Sophist,* etc.

Lastly, he gave, as was the custom in the *philosophie* class at the Lycée Bonaparte, one month's lectures on the *Theodicea.* Though later on he facetiously inscribed on the cover, "Theodicea, with full orchestral accompaniment," he had nevertheless taken great pains with the preparation of the thirteen lessons he had to give.

These works placed him on the highest pinnacle in the eyes of his masters and fellow-students; his professors, in their periodical reports, expressed their approbation in the highest terms. "M. Taine has a remarkable intellect and will sooner or later do credit to the École by publications of a serious order," wrote M. Jules Simon at the end of the last term of the third year; "his work of the whole year has been most persevering . . . his progress is considerable . . . M. Taine will ever be irreproachable

[1] The complete text of these notes, and of many others, is to be found in M. Gabriel Monod's book, *Renan, Taine and Michelet.*

in his conduct and behaviour; he will have authority over his pupils; he already has a real talent for teaching." M. Saisset's report ran thus: "M. Taine unfolded in his lectures a clear, supple, resourceful mind, perfectly gifted for teaching. In written dissertations M. Taine is again in the front rank by the number and merit of his works. . . . His principal defect is his excessive taste for the abstract. M. Taine should be encouraged and held in check. He is the hope of the coming competition. . . ." Finally M. Vacherot had, already in the preceding year, written of him the following eulogy, which honours the master as well as the pupil: "The hardest worker, the most remarkable student whom I have ever known at the École Normale. Prodigiously learned for his age. Has an ardour and an avidity for knowledge such as I have never met with before. A mind remarkable for rapidity of conception, subtlety, delicacy and force of thought. Understands, conceives, judges and formulates too hastily, however. Is too fond of formulæ and definitions, to which he too often sacrifices reality, quite unconsciously, though, for he is perfectly sincere. Taine will make a very distinguished professor, but also and especially a savant of the first order. With great gentleness of character and amiable manners, he has an indomitable firmness of mind, to that extent that no one exerts any influence on his thoughts. Indeed, he is not of this world. Spinoza's motto will be his: *Live to think.* Behaviour and conduct excellent. As to his morals, I believe his exceptional and superior nature to be a stranger to every passion save that for Truth. This student stands first by a long way in all the examinations."

A brilliant success seemed to await so many efforts and so much uncontested merit. It was not to be so, however, and when Hippolyte Taine went up, in 1851, for the philosophy *agrégation*, he failed to pass. The jury, presided over by Count Portalis, a member of the Institute and of the Superior Council of Public Instruction, was composed of MM. Bénard, Franck, Garnier, Gibon, and the Abbé Noirot. Its decision struck with amazement the masters and fellow-students of the unfortunate candidate; here is the account given by some of them of this episode with which M. Taine's career opened so unpropitiously:—

Prévost-Paradol to Octave Gréard.

September 7, 1851.

. . . Your Édouard (de Suckau) has passed first for the *agrégation*. Nonsense, you will say, what about Taine? Taine, my dear fellow, has simply been plucked, after undergoing the most brilliant, the most solid examination I have ever witnessed in the Sorbonne. Our poor Édouard is quite ashamed of having beaten his master; he charmed his judges by his knowledge, his elegant *abandon* and the Teutonic softness of his speech. But those are childish qualities by the side of the force, clearness, accuracy and logic of my friend Taine. You cannot think what an effect he produced on me, how proud I was of him, and what hopes I have of him for the future. I had never yet seen him so supple, so sinewy, so clear, and, especially, so completely at his ease. He was the master of them all, and there was some respect in the attention given him. His delivery is very steady, and at the same

time animated; a contained warmth, an inward flame seem to give life to whatever he touches. It is passion clothed in reason. How did they manage to reject him? Listen to the ugly tale, and congratulate me on having already last year left this dark chamber of philosophical teaching. You know that the vivâ voce examination consists for each candidate in one lesson and two argumentations. It fell to Taine to argue with Édouard. It would be impossible to tell you the gentleness, friendliness and persuasion with which Taine showed himself superior to him without in the least degree humiliating him. The test did great credit to both, but especially to Taine. Fate then decided on Aubé to argue with Taine. The question was: *Proofs of the Existence of God,* in Bossuet. (You see that Fate was not favourable to Taine!) He stated his postulate, which was quite invincible. Aubé then attacked him with ridiculous emphasis on his omission of the mention of Providence, and on the implicit tendency which seemed to make him confuse Bossuet with Spinoza. You cannot imagine a more disloyal, clumsy, cowardly, and persistent attack.

He ranted so much that the examiners interrupted him several times. Taine came out of it most admirably, and the judges now own to every one that after the argumentations Taine undoubtedly held the first rank. The next day Taine gave his lesson on the Object of Morality; he had given it in the morning at the École, before Édouard, Marot, and others, who all thought it excellent. I heard it at the Sorbonne, and followed it with pleasure, persuaded that it placed him definitively beyond competition. And it is for that lesson that they plucked him! They say

that he did it otherwise than the jury had conceived it; that there had been a mistake on his part (and on ours then!), and that that brilliant and learned lesson alone prevented him from being admitted.[1] I call that an injustice and a lie. Of what account would science and talent then be to them, if an uncontested superiority could disappear before an absolutely material (and doubtful!!) mistake, as to the object of the lesson!!!

As to my Taine, he takes it all very quietly, and he is right, for he has the better part, and the future belongs to him—or rather to us—for this blow has made our concord more intimate and more cordial than ever. . . .

If you ever see the *Liberté de Penser*, you will *perhaps* find in it a short article by M. Louis Brégan and a note in the bulletin, which, though signed *Jacques*, is also by that M. L. B. It is intended to be unpleasant to Taine's judges: let us hope it will fulfil its object.

[1] M. Monod, who elucidated with much care this point of M. Taine's biography, says that the lesson on Bossuet obtained maximum marks (20), and that the failure was due to other causes. The subjects for the written competition were: For Doctrinal Philosophy—"Of the faculties of the soul; demonstration of Liberty. Of the Ego, its identity and its unity." For the History of Philosophy—"Socrates, after Xenophon and Plato." The fashion in which M. Taine treated these subjects did not please the jury, and, without the efforts of M. Bénard, who had been his master at Bourbon, he would not have been declared admissible. The second vivâ voce lesson, where he had to expose the plan of a moral system, was fatal to him; he had taken for a theme Spinoza's proposition: "The greater efforts a man makes to preserve his being, the more virtue he has; the more a thing acts, the more perfect it is." The lesson was declared *absurd* by the jury. (See *Renan, Taine and Michelet.*)

THE ÉCOLE NORMALE

Extract from Prévost-Paradol's Article in the "Liberté de Penser" [1] (vol. viii. p. 600).

We profess the sincerest esteem for the character of M. Portalis; we therefore much regret that his début in the chair of the jury for the philosophy *agrégation* should have been marked by the greatest misfortune which can befall a conscientious judge: that of committing an evident injustice.

One candidate had been noted amongst all others by the extent of his knowledge, the force, elegance and clearness of his speech, and the unexpected maturity of his talent. In argumentation, he had united a rare subtlety with a coolness, justness and moderation even rarer. He had given the most clearest, coherent and most philosophical lesson that had been heard at the Sorbonne for years. Friends and rivals considered the candidate peerless and expected him to pass first. And M. Taine was simply refused! He fails because he has given proof of his sincerity and good taste. He fails because he disdained easy declamations on Providence, religious Morality and the necessity of a cult: common-places which the distinction of his mind alone would have sufficed to keep him from uttering. In fact, he has failed because he gave new demonstrations of old truths, because he did not

[1] The entire text is reproduced by M. Gréard, *Prévost-Paradol*, p. 175. Prévost writes to M. Gréard on the subject (Oct. 1, 1851: "The note on Taine is out, and the *Siècle* has reproduced it. About and others recognized me. I did not hesitate to own up. I saw Taine, who took it very well. As to Édouard, he had approved of the manuscript."

merely recite the elementary books of the intolerant École, because he united knowledge and independence, etc., etc. . . ."

Finally MM. Vacherot and Jules Simon wrote to Hippolyte Taine, to condole with his failure, letters which proved their affectionate and profound esteem :—

M. Jules Simon to H. Taine.

September 6, 1851.

You have failed! De Suckau will not mind if I tell you that you were the one whose success seemed to us most assured; I speak for *all* your masters. Such is life. You are worthy to bear this first sorrow well. It is nothing, really, but it will seem hard to you, at your age. If the testimony of a master who is at the same time your friend can help you to take courage, let me assure you that I have had few pupils more capable than you of being *agrégés*. . . ."

M. Vacherot to M. Taine.

September, 1851.

MY DEAR TAINE,—I was as surprised as I was grieved by your failure. I knew who were the examiners whom you had to face,[1] but the presence of my friend Bénard

[1] The members of the jury were not as insensible as has been believed to the merits of the young philosopher. We find in a letter from Édouard de Suckau (Nov. 11, 1851): "I called on M. l'abbé Noirot at Lyons. He gave me new and curious details about the *agrégation*. According to him, there was but one reproach that could be made against your lesson; it was not suitable: it was too exalted for a college audience; but he accepted it all, plan, method, principle, deductions, definitions, everything. There was *nothing*

reassured me on your account. I do not know what happened amongst them, but I am convinced that you owed your failure to N., the most absolute and narrow-minded man I know. He takes no account of talent or originality of thought, and woe betide him who unconsciously contradicts his *little ideas*, *paupertinam philosophiam*. I know him so well that if I had been in Paris and in communication with you at the time of the examination I should most probably have kept you clear of that rock. How was it that your professors and M. Bénard did not warn you. N. must have influenced the whole jury!

Your failure is not serious, you know; you are none the less worthy of passing at the head of the list, and it is all the worse for the examiners who could not or would not justly balance merits and faults. You cannot have been, and you certainly were not—from all I have heard—

fallacious (I pressed him on details to make him say that), only a misplaced expenditure of talent. The greatest exclamations came from M. Portalis and M. Franck, M. Franck especially. As for him; M. Noirot, he had not agreed with them in the least. What prevented the publication of the report (by M. Portalis), he thought, was the disagreement of the members of the jury as to the motives of your exclusion, and the desire to drop the unjust blame which had fallen upon you and upon the philosophical teaching of the École into oblivion." Letter from M. Jules Simon to H. Taine, October 1851: "Bénard owns that some passion was brought into the judgment of your last trial; it appears that M. Portalis declares in his report that your lesson is a regular revelation of the teaching at the École, and that it will not be too soon to get rid of professors who train such pupils. I have Saisset's word for this." M. Portalis's report alone was not published; it has disappeared from the Archives of the Public Education Office, as also the notes concerning M. Taine.

so far beneath yourself as not to preserve a great superiority over all your competitors. But you were already suspected of bad *tendencies*, and you were unfortunate enough to fall upon N. as an examiner.

Do not worry about the future; whatever happens you will take your proper place next year. You will then be all the more secure of success, whatever examiners you may have, that you will have been teaching science for a year to young minds which you will have to reach by descending to their level. Whatever place is given you, beware of refusing and of asking for leave. *Elementary* teaching is a test which is absolutely necessary to you. It is the only preparation you have not had, and I earnestly recommend it to you. I expected to find you resigned, but I congratulate you now none the less on your practical philosophy.

I do not advise you to take Hegel's Logic as a subject for your thesis; the Faculty would not accept it. Psychology, even elementary, still in a great degree remains to be created. Concentrate your readings this year and all your meditations on that part of Science, still so new and so interesting.

Thus encouraged and counselled, Hippolyte Taine joined his family at Vouziers and waited for the post which was to be given him in October.

Part III

PROFESSORSHIP

CHAPTER I

Appointment at Nevers—Preparation of Lectures for the *Agrégation*, and of the Theses on *Sensation*—Correspondence

A new life, no less full than the former, was about to begin in the provinces. Mme.'s Taine' great desire, shared by her son, was that the latter should obtain a post in a *lycée* near Paris, so that their separation should be lessened, and in order that Hippolyte Taine should more easily fulfil his duties as head of the family towards his young sisters. He also much desired to remain within reach of the Libraries and of the great scientific centres which were to help him to continue his physiological studies. Friends had interceded, to that effect, with the Minister, and amongst them M. Guizot himself, to whom the young Normalien had been introduced by his son-in-law, Cornélis de Witt. But universitarian hostility prevailed, and his presence in the neighbourhood of Paris was not desired; he was given a post at the Toulon *lycée*. After some further

solicitations, the Minister consented to entrust to him the Assistant Professorship of Philosophy at Nevers, which was vacant at the time on account of the ill-health of the then incumbent of that post: this position was considered by M. Taine's friends as very far below his deserts. He was obliged to take possession of it at once, to prepare his lectures in haste, and to organize his material life, busying himself for the first time with practical details very uncongenial to his contemplative nature. He made up his mind to all these little troubles with his accustomed resignation, and applied himself first of all to reassuring his mother, whose anxious tenderness was alarmed at this complete change of life. This year was perhaps the most laborious and the most fruitful of Hippolyte Taine's life; to the preparation for the Philosophy *agrégation*, discontinued in December, immediately succeeded that for the *agrégation des lettres*. He wrote, in vain, his Psychology theses, which were refused, and he had to turn to the more innocent subjects of La Fontaine and the Young Men of Plato. The intellectual persecution of which he was then the object no doubt prevented him from giving himself up to pure abstraction, and, by constraining him to go back to Literature and History, it has endowed us with such works as the *History of English Literature* and the *Origines de la France Contemporaine*. But it was not without deep suffering (of which a trace will be found in his letters in 1852) that he momentarily detached himself from what Prévost-Paradol called "his pure and beloved mistress," the philosophical research of Absolute Truth. He did not yet know that an ardent vocation like his, associated with a powerful will, can resist the greatest trials,

and that all his works, whether literary, æsthetic, or historical, would be but varied applications of his psychological theories.

The planning out of his lectures took up some precious time which he would have liked to use in more exalted speculations; but he looked upon this sacrifice as the ransom of his independence. Some of his pupils were intelligent enough, and understood his lectures; he was still hoping at that time to pass his Philosophy *agrégation* in the summer, and, not satisfied with so much work, he began to prepare a psychology thesis. He spent many of his solitary evenings at Nevers in making that series of observations of himself which were thereafter to find a place in the treatise on *Sensations*, and which he also utilized in the Theory of the Intelligence. Sitting alone by his fireside, he analysed his sensations of taste, smell, of touch, of hearing, and of sight, writing them down in notes which have been preserved. His correspondence gives us the essential facts of that period of his life, and shows the vicissitudes he had to go through before he ended his University career. He preserved, as in former years, several notes of his readings and of the manuscripts of his principal works.

To his Mother.

October 15, 1851.

All is well. I have a pretty, bright room on the second floor, facing the best street, a dressing-room, and a little hall passage, with a lot of cupboards; I dine at a boarding-house, with several of the College Professors. The Principal seems pleasant; he has just been here and

has asked me to dinner for to-morrow. I begin my lectures on Friday; to-morrow I shall spend the day paying calls. The Principal promises that I shall have the *baccalauréat* candidates to prepare: it will take five hours a week—I shall have to correct exercises, etc.; very little trouble, really. I shall get 500 fr. for it.

. . . I have only just arrived, and have not much to say: the Professors I have met do not seem very distinguished, either in mind or manners. The *Proviseur* seems a good fellow, and he is better than the others. But you need not fear that I shall frequent bad company. I have not yet planned out my time: I must see how much will be taken up by my class and my lectures. They say the neighbourhood is pretty. I shall walk out a great deal. I am going to learn much concerning both men and things. It was time I left the Convent for real life; this year is perhaps a unique opportunity of making acquaintance with a small town, its inhabitants, and a mediocre college —real provincial life in fact.

My room is very nice except for three pictures, which represent Italian brigands surprised by soldiers of the Pope, and the gunner heroine of Saragossa; they are worthy of Tobais' fish and of the phenomenal dog with a horse's legs. I would have taken them down if I were not afraid of hurting the feelings of my landlady. Am I beginning to hide my opinions and to consider people? Wily as the serpent, strong as the lion!!!

PROFESSORSHIP

To Édouard de Suckau.[1]

October 22, 1851.

MY DEAR,[2]—Thank you; Here is now for my news: I am Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Nevers, with 1,200 fr., instead of 1,800 at Toulon. My mother was very sorry, as you will imagine, but I have exhorted her so much and have appeared so pleased that she has made up her mind to it at last. I found that here, besides my class, I have the coaching of the baccaluréat candidates five hours a week, and 500 fr. a year, so that Nevers is worth almost as much as Toulon. Even without this, I should have more than I want; what is there to spend money on? The theatre here is execrable. I shall hardly go into society at all. My books and piano are already bought. *Cafés* disgust me, and I spend all day working in a room!

I have sixteen pupils; what do you think of that, Monsieur the First Agrégé and Lycée Professor? They seem about as imbecile as in Paris, much more ignorant and much more docile. I have to go back to Antiquity, History, and Literature for my evening baccalauréat classes. It is not a bad thing; I should otherwise have no opportunity of ever speaking on those subjects.

I dine in a boarding-house with two mathematical professors (one of whom is Roulier[3]), two notary's clerks, one Post Office managing clerk, and one man in a tax-collecting

[1] M. de Suckau had just been appointed to a Professor's chair at the lycée of St. Etienne, near Lyons.

[2] In English in the original.

[3] M. Roulier had entered the École Normale (scientific section) in 1821.

office, not bad fellows, ordinary and rather noisy, Liberals, and rather unchristian. Unfortunately, they are sadly wanting in wit or humour. I called on the authorities, but they were out, as also most of my colleagues; I left cards. The Chaplain is witty, but he is a knave; he returned my call, and as I was showing him out he said: "We will help each other, we will warn each other; for instance, you could let me know if one of your pupils showed signs of *irreligion*." I was amazed; he was already downstairs before I was able to answer. The Vice-Principal is a jolly, fat man, very free in his language. The Principal goes to vespers; he is very friendly, and has asked me to dinner. His wife is a Society woman, a Catholic and a Reactionary, she talks well, and spoke English to me; she is the only person I care to meet here (do not misunderstand me, she is fifty!). The Rector is a priest, but a good Universitarian, and well disposed towards the College; the Bishop is dangerous. I shall not see many people; I am too aristocratic in my tastes, and the air of Nevers is too Bœotian. I shall only now and then turn the pages of my neighbours and colleagues. I give my lectures with care and *prudence*, trying to introduce a few ideas in those unripe brains; it is a good preparation for the *agrégation*.

Such is my inferior *ego*. But I spend half the day in a better region, in conversing with you and other friends, or with my books, my piano, and especially my work. I am experimenting on myself, old fellow. I have begun a long essay on *Sensations*. You know that, in my view, they are the starting point of psychology, and that in them are to be found the clearest notions on the

nature of the Soul, etc. . . . Perhaps it will be my thesis. M. Vacherot told me that an exposition of Hegel's doctrines would not be accepted. At any rate, it will be the beginning of long researches on psychology. That, my dear Édouard, is going to keep me company all the winter. I put my feet on my fender, I poke my fire, I smoke, I read, in fact I lead the life of a hermit. As long as I have food for my brains I am sure not to be bored—the rest may go as it pleases.

You recognize your old Chief, do you not? But the Chief is incomplete without his Édouard. I miss you, my dear Ed. I knew I was fond of you, but on the day of the *agrégation* you behaved so like a Sister of Mercy, a Madonna of Charity, that I have kept a sort of filial recollection of you. You tended my wounds with the lightest hand I have ever felt, and one does not forget those things; I shall ever be your debtor after that day. If the same thing happens to me again next year, I shall again rely on your consolations; this, my dear fellow, is my trouble for this year, it is that well-founded fear, my interrupted career and uncertain future: I tried to pass under the Caudine Forks, and have been repulsed; shall I be more successful a second time? Well, it cannot be helped, and I am already prepared for that misfortune.

I do not know what is the plan of studies that I am asked for. If it is a programme, it is that of the baccalauréat. A profession of faith? Come!! The Principal is going to show me that of my predecessor.

Write to me about your projects concerning Philosophy, about your present doctrines, give me back my Édouard of the École!!

I am wily like the serpent. God bless you, my brother.

To Mademoiselle Virginie Taine.

October 29, 1851.

You ask me for details, my dear girl; they are not very amusing, but here they are: I get up at 5.30, prepare my class till 7.30, give it from 8 to 10, practise the piano till 11, and have lunch from 11 to 12. From 12 to 4, and from 7 p.m. to 10, I work for myself. I give a lecture in College from 4.15 to 5.15, and have some music from 5.15 to 6, when I dine. On Thursdays and Sundays I am free.

I have the baccalauréat class; my pupils are ignorant, but willing, and I find some pleasure in introducing ideas into those new brains. My lectures make me read up the great writers, which is an advantage. On the whole, the balance is on the right side.

I am very comfortable; my room is nice, my bed soft; when my head aches with work, I have my piano and cigarettes. I have begun two long papers; ideas run in my head and chatter away all day. I have not a minute to be bored. I shall not see much of my table companions, there is no sympathy between us; I may see something of the Rhetoric Professor. Yesterday I had some music with Madame la Principale, who is not up to much. I could frequent a few drawing-rooms if I liked, but I hardly wish to do so, I revel too much in my solitude and freedom. My books and music recall so many things, happy talks and conversations by the fireside in the evening! How difficult it is to converse! Stiff commonplaces with my colleagues, jokes at dinner with my fellow boarders, that is all. Every day the human level seems to me lower.

But I bury myself in my philosophy, and (forgive my fatuity !) I think myself good enough company not to be bored when alone.

Uncle Alexandre came on Monday. I took him to the table d'hôte, and we chattered in my room all the evening, before *my* fire, and sipping *my* coffee. I laugh to think of myself as a housekeeper, a host ! I assure you, I manage very well. I do not see that any expenses are required ; it is pleasure that costs men so much, and I take mine very economically, seated at my writing table. I am proud that other men's amusements do not amuse me. I should be unhappy if I saw no other object in my life than the attaining some rank or other. My ambition goes far beyond that, and my will has never yet failed my ambition.

M. N. has written me a somewhat pedantic and condescending letter of advice, with a slight shade of acidity. I answered quite properly, telling him that I was not a vampire, that I did not wish to overturn any of the beliefs of the young men confided to me, that my teaching was *parallel*, and that I did not speak of Metaphysics but simply of the actions of the mind, of the rules of reasoning and of conduct. It appears that they wrote from the Cabinet to M. Guizot : " We hope that M. Taine will justify by the wisdom of his teaching and of his conduct the confidence of the honourable gentlemen who . . . etc." You see what that means ! M. N. thereupon thought me plague-stricken. I am sending him the syllabus of my lectures as a certificate of salubrity. But what villainy in the École ! For I gave cause for that outward opinion by no outward action ! Who can have pried into our conversations ? M. Y. perhaps, through his zealots, or M. Z. . . . I have heard here

of some tricks of his in former times. I wonder. Anyhow, I shall be as dumb as the dead here, so as to be in odour of sanctity next year.

My health is very good; do not let mother worry about me. My trouble is but a pin-prick to my pride. If I am to succeed hereafter, I must have a few years of solitary meditation. I am working with a good heart here, my wheat is ripening for the harvest.

Write and tell me also how you spend your day, the books you read, what you think of them. If you have fetched the Rethel books, read Voltaire's *Charles XII.* and *Essay on Manners*, and Rousseau's *Émile* or else La Bruyère's Characters. Let us have a few discussions by correspondence. Try and get my mother too to read a little; it is the only way of soothing the mind and forgetting troubles. The activity of the mind is the best medicine for sadness. I do not know the future, but certainly your education has provided you with a refuge in the companionship of the great minds of the past. The insipidity of the present life and the stupidity of our acquaintances is forgotten when we go into that other world. Education is but a card of invitation to those noble and privileged *salons*. I advise my Sophie to take Froissart from our books. If you could have St. Simon's *Memoirs* it would be better still. Send me a list of the principal books you have, and I will tell you what to read.

To Prévost-Paradol.

October 30, 1851.

MY DEAR PRÉVOST,—I have had so many duty letters to write that I had to postpone the pleasurable ones. You

will forgive me, will you not? Besides, you have probably heard of me through Edmond (About), to whom I sent a work on Homer. By the bye, ask him if he has received it, and tell him to write to me (his address is Rue des Francs-Bourgeois St. Michel, Hôtel St. Michel).

Well, I have left the harbour where you are still at anchor, and I am sailing across Life's ocean. That ocean, my dear fellow, is a bog, a stagnant puddle. It is all flat and insipid. What shall I tell you of my fellow boarders? They are merry, and honourable, they have had a liberal education and studied law in Paris, they are unmarried, they have liberal opinions—two notary's clerks, two tax-collectors, and two College Professors. They make puns and improper jokes, get hoarse over politics, and are even witty sometimes.

My other colleagues, the Principal, the people I meet, are sufficiently well bred; they talk, they appear to think, but they are bores. I became spoilt at the École; we shall never find anything like it again. The pleasure of feeling oneself surrounded by open young minds, sharpened by studies and perpetual contact, is lost for ever. After a certain age one becomes stiffened in one's ideas and habits. One appears to think and to feel, but really one only remembers; petrification is fatal. If death were not there to bring about new generations, ideas would not advance by one step, and we should still be building pyramids like the Egyptians.

I am struggling as well as I can against this benumbing influence. I work for two hours every morning at preparation for my class, which I take at 8 o'clock. It leaves me seven hours a day, besides Thursdays and Sundays for my

private studies. I have again begun long researches on Sensations. It is in them that the union between the body and the soul is most clearly to be seen. That will be my thesis, since they will not have an exposition of Hegel's Logic.

I am reading Logic, and understanding it, but it is as difficult to woo as the coyest maiden. Still, it takes me up into exalted regions. Voltaire used to say to Mme. du Deffand that metaphysical dreams had that advantage, that they carried one to the Empyrean.

You see my life: to-day, being Thursday, I am going to look at the country. Once or twice I have had some music in the evening with Mme. la Principale. I smoke, I warm my toes; I have some beautiful sonatas here—on the whole I am content.

Our Rector is a good man, though a priest. He has advised me to be prudent; my lectures are, in appearance, as innocent as possible.[1] Nothing but Psychology, Logic, and Morality. I announce in my syllabus that I shall not dwell upon the *Theodicea*, and that, on account of the difficulties of that part of the Science, I would substitute

[1] The Philosophy lectures were perhaps not as innocent as M. Taine thought they were. The Psychology lessons are indeed sheltered under the names of Aristotle, Descartes, Reid, Cousin, Jouffroy, Maine de Biran; but Locke, Hume, Condillac, Cabanis and Müller also intervene from time to time. It is difficult to believe that, at the time when he was writing the first sketch of that treatise of the Sensations which was to become the subject of his thesis, so sincere a man should not have betrayed his convictions while speaking of Exterior Perception, of Sensation, of the Association of Ideas or of Images. See Appendix III., the syllabus of these lectures.

the words and authority of Descartes, Bossuet, etc., for my own. . . . I will do four or five months' psychology; when my pupils part with me, they will not believe that we see God face to face, that the soul is a little being located nowhere, or that a stone is composed of immaterial monads, as we are taught with so much success. Otherwise, my circumspection is absolute. I am keeping myself to myself, I only quote psychologists or physiologists in my lectures; I am scrupulously polite with everybody. Pray that I may not become like the people I frequent here. How is your Bernardin,[1] you happy laureate?

Édouard has written to me. Well, good-bye till next year, and let us try to be in the same town; I should like to have you as a companion in this desert.

Tell N. I shall write to him soon; you will continue to lead him in the path of virtue, will you not? Give me news of the École and of the recruits to be made there.

If you have the opportunity, will you call at Franck's, Rue Richelieu, and tell him to send me the end of my Hegel?

Beg Planat's pardon for me—I have not yet written to him.

To Mademoiselle Sophie Taine.

November 9, 1851.

But why will you imagine that I am unhappy? How could I be so with these enchanting studies and the ideas

[1] Prévost-Paradol was writing a Eulogy of Bernardin de Saint Pierre, which obtained the Eloquence prize given by the Académie Française in 1852.

which are incessantly at work in my brain, conversing with me as if they were my best and most delightful friends? My life is so full that I have not a moment to feel dull or sad. When I get up, I think while I am dressing, and I forget that it would be pleasant to stay in bed. After all where is the hardship of working in the early morning, in a warm dressing-gown, with my feet on a carpet? I acquired the habit at the École, and I retain it; it adds two extra hours to my life every day; in twelve years' time it will make a year. To live is to act and to produce; you could have no esteem for a lazy Sybarite.

It is well to read Froissart, but do not ask him for facts, simply note the manners and customs of the time; read it like a novel. You can read Rollin in the same way, but you will profit less by it. I had asked you for a list of our books. Ask mother to give you Bernardin de St. Pierre; read Racine's letters to his son, to Boileau, and the correspondence of his youth, also M. Villemain's literature course, and M. Nisard's. Mother will tell you what to read of Mme. de Staël, and I am particularly anxious that you should procure M. Mignet's *French Revolution*. It is in two volumes only, and will spare you from reading M. Thiers. Do not extract facts; merely take note of special traits, and write down your criticisms; send me a shortened copy of your notes in mother's letters. To read is the chief thing now. Your former studies have supplied you with a frame, which you must now fill with the ideas you will get from your reading.

I have the most docile pupils; everything is going on well in the College. The Principal has asked me to his house for to-morrow evening. Nobody here will set the

river on fire, but I meet with courtesy and kindliness everywhere. I have no worries, my domestic cares are almost *nil*. My life is hardly changed from what it was; I took with me all my brain-furniture, so that I find myself quite at home. And then I have my piano and my books. When I am at my table or by my fire, following out my ideas or writing down my experiences, I am in Paradise; and, if my head aches, how tender and expressive is Mendelssohn's music, or Mozart's! When I think of so many other poor fellows I feel inclined to become a socialist against myself and to curse myself as privileged.

I have just received 100 fr. and 90 c. for my travelling expenses: I am a Crœsus. We shall meet, but at Vouziers; I shall perhaps have ten days, and what would mother do here whilst I was at the College or preparing my classes? I would a hundred times rather see the dear old house and spend a happy week in our own home. Come, *coraggio, mia cara*, and let us look forward! One day, when I am a Minister, it will be an agreeable contrast to think of Nevers College.

I am becoming accustomed to my fellow boarders and to the people with whom I exchange calls; but, frankly, I am better alone. Is it sheer vanity? In that case it would also be flattering to you three, for you have made me difficult to please. Yes, my dear, one day you will know how rare it is to meet with unaffected cleverness, sentiment and culture, and you will then appreciate yourselves.

To Prévost-Paradol.

November 16, 1851.

You are an adorable being! If I were Ed. I would hug you, to reward you for such a letter; you are I, I am you, how delightful!

My dear friend, you are indeed right when you look upon Science as mystical.[1] Nature is God, the real God, and why? Because it is perfectly beautiful, eternally living, absolutely one and necessary. Is it not because their God is such that the Christians love Him? And if we will have none of Him, it is because His human attributes vilify Him so far as to make of Him a king or a lover. I would therefore say to our Gréard: "The true God is what you love in the Christian God, He is not what you despise. He therefore satisfies your heart as well as your reason. Leave to nuns their Lover, to valets their King; you who are a free and a learned man can have no God but the infinite and perfect All. They know Him not who deny that He is God, saying that He is multiple and imperfect. Multiplicity, Imperfection, and Contingence are but a delusion of the abstracting spirit. One part of the world claims another, as one organ of the body makes all others necessary; and the world is one, like the human body. Each part of the world is imperfect, because its complement and the rest of its being is in the others, and thus is the All perfect. Those who deny that such a God

[1] Gréard, p. 177: "Is it possible to establish a reasonable mysticism or Pantheism? . . . How is the heart to be fed without lying to Reason? Octave has often asked me that question. No, say I, there is a scientific mysticism. . . . Nature tends towards the Good, which is the development of her order. . . ."

can be worshipped are ignorant of the enchantments of science. The man who, on studying the laws of Mind and of Matter, realizes that they all hold in one unique law —which is that the Being tends to exist—who sees this inward necessity, like a universal soul, organizing star systems, establishing the blood current in an animal's veins, leading the mind towards the contemplation of the infinite—who sees the whole world emerge, living and magnificent, from a unique and eternal principle—this man experiences a deeper joy and admiration than the bigot kneeling before a magnified Man: each object that the Christian sees reminds him of its architect; each object shows us the universal Law and Soul which moves all. Which is best, when gazing at a landscape, to think of a great gardener's talent, or to gaze upon a living Being, resting and developing, and stirring all the sympathies within our hearts?

What lovely fireside talks we should have, if only you were here, my dear fellow! But you are far away, and you are the only person in the world with whom I can talk of these things. I too converse with you though absent. Whilst I gave you Spinoza, you gave me Burdach and Geoffroy St. Hilaire. I was becoming a naturalist and you a metaphysician, and now we are one and the same mind. Do not fear lest I should weaken. We will fence together if we are alone; I am preparing all sorts of weapons. My first bout will be in psychology. There are some admirable things to say about the sensations, the movements, the generation of passions, and against the vision of God and the separation of the soul from the body. There is a whole series of explanations to be substituted to final causes.

Nature, which, in producing individuals, isolates one portion of Matter from the others, re-establishes *unity* by the constitution of the senses. The eye, intended for light, exists but for light, in the same way as the liver exists but for the stomach and is organized but to dissolve food. This relation constitutes its being, and, as the two terms must be assembled in one in order to conceive a relation, the eye and the light can only be conceived by assembling in a superior unity Nature and the living man. Above the senses is Thought, which itself only exists by its relation with its object, whose object is the All, and which thus establishes the unity of the whole of Nature. The Being, indetermined and multiple at first, afterwards becomes determined by isolated individuals, and finally acquires its highest determination by assembling its isolated individuals into one universal unity. See how far psychology can take us!

Of news I have none. Suckau has written to me; his mother is staying with him, and he is very happy; he consults me as to a subject for his thesis. Edmond has also written, asking me to wake him up; he is in a world of pleasure, and cannot drag his feet out of the mire. His senses are too acute and his mind too brilliant; he yearns too much for enjoyment and for show. But what a strong man, if he only would!! See him, and make a fighter of him. I can well understand that you are not attracted towards him; you both are charged with positive electricity, and you repel each other. Édouard, Sarcey, and I, who are quieter, attract you, our electricity is negative. Is it not his delightful gentleness which makes you love Édouard? But, I repeat, do see something of Edmond.

He is not at heart a "sensuous egotist"—his force is capable of exerting itself in any direction, and is now directed in that particular way; but he is capable of directing it otherwise. I have seen him study Plato and Aristotle for a month at a time; the pleasure of beating the Catholics would make him a Benedictine monk for six months. He is especially militant and active; things should be presented to him from that point of view. Besides, he is too proud to resign himself to being merely a witty man. And my poor Planat? I have no answer from him. You know that at heart he is saddened by his precarious position, which forces him to put aside Philosophy and the things of the mind. He, at least, would have made a good soldier. Tell me how he is, or tell him to write to me; he is the third member of our old Bourbon trio; do go and look him up!!

Have the candidates to the École been sorted that it is thus poisoned? Is Lachelier, the first year head student, a Huguenot? How comical that the most heretical of heretics should lead other heretics! The N. party will revive!!

Crouslé is rather well disposed; you must sow the good seed in his mind; our influence is very small at present.

Good-bye, old fellow; did you hurry the bookseller of the Rue Richelieu?—he has not sent my German books. Those I have are splendid; I am glad I thought of learning German. The source of Burdach and Geoffroy St. Hilaire is there. Hegel is a Spinoza multiplied by Aristotle. It is very different from the ridiculous metaphysics with which we were nourished.

To his Mother.

November 18, 1851.

Are you forgetting me, dear mother, that you do not answer me ? or have you no time to yourself that I never see your handwriting ? My own time is entirely taken up : what with classes, essays I have begun, and my correspondence, I do not know which way to turn. But I have an hour to myself, and I want to have a chat with you. It is class time ; I am at my desk, and my pupils are writing ; I can hear nothing but the scratching of their pens.

I have no news ; I would not call news an evening spent at the Principal's, where I played the piano a little and bored myself a great deal. The ladies are affected ; everybody plays whist or talks scandal about people I do not know ; I am more comfortable at my own fireside.

I love my fireside ; on Sunday and Thursday evenings I really enjoy myself. I bring up an arm-chair, put on a big dressing-gown, light a cigarette, and, taking a library book, Don Quixote, Rabelais, or La Fontaine, indulge in delightful dreams, gazing on the sparkling fire and the sinuous tobacco smoke, listening to the rumbling of carriages, and thinking of our Paris evenings. I am now an artist in coffee making, and I have a special talent for lighting fires—my education is complete.

It seems as if I had not left the Capital (as they call it here). I constantly meet people who have just returned from Paris ; my fellow boarders have all lived there. My life is almost the same, with freedom besides. Sometimes I go out into the country. It is flat—the mountains only begin five or six leagues away ; but I think that the wide

horizons and monotonous meadows are not without some charm.

The town is on the right bank of the Loire, against a hill; the streets are steep and narrow. But many of the houses are of an antique and original build, which I like, and some old towers and feudal gates prevent one from noticing modern stone and plaster. There is a library, a poor one, but my own books suffice me. Above the town is a sort of public park with fine trees and grass, from which there is a nice view. Snow and rain are coming now, and I shall not enjoy all this till the summer. But I have not a dull moment; my time is so full that I do not notice its flight. You used to be sorry sometimes to see me work so hard; why, it is the only amusement, the greatest pleasure.

At our table are six men and three dogs; some day I will tell you about the habits of all the nine. The professors I have seen make a lot of money with private lessons, for which they charge highly. The aristocracy pay big prices for lessons to their daughters. I could have some private pupils if I liked. But ugh! Professors here are like grocers or pork butchers—they sell their wares during thirty years and then buy a house with their savings and retire! Of ambition, pride, mind or soul, they have none. They are wound-up speaking automatons, who speak as long as their larynx is not worn out.

Here is the scheme of study that Sophie asked me for:

Write an epitome of your author. Write an epitome of your epitome. Sum up your second epitome in four or five lines.

To N.[1]

November 22, 1851.

Am I of so little account to you that you have no confidence in me, and that you only tell me of your trouble after I have heard of it through another? I cannot tell you, my dear boy, how distressed I am to hear such news; I am sorry to be so far away, not to know exactly what your sorrow is, not to be able to console you, to cure you, if possible! I must be a poor master, and I must have let your judgment go very wrong for you to suffer from such mad terrors? Think of me, show me that you care for me; you have told me a hundred times that you do; will you not prove it? Anyhow, let us reason together; we ought to have done so sooner. I do not know what vows and oaths or what scruples are in question; tell me, that I may answer you. But be they what they may, your alarms come from a false idea that you have conceived of God. Fears of Him? Engagements taken towards Him? True religion does not represent Him like an exacting creditor, ready to prosecute you if you fail in one point of an imaginary promise. He does not want promises, do not make Him

[1] It has been seen with what passion M. Taine led his philosophical crusade amongst his comrades at the École. It is interesting to show how much, on the other hand, he respected the religious beliefs of his friends, even when they were tainted with exaggeration. A youth of his acquaintance had become a prey to mysticism, and indulged in practices which had compromised his health and shaken the balance of his mind. His alarmed parents, knowing his admiration for M. Taine, begged the latter to intervene. The above is a fragment of a letter written by him in these delicate circumstances.

any; it is treating Him as a man, as an equal, it is debasing and degrading Him. The only oath due to Him is the promise of never committing a bad action, and of always keeping one's dignity, probity and honour. And you know well that you have never failed to keep that oath. Can you make other engagements when you imagine Him as He is, that is, as an Infinite, Eternal, and Perfect Being, ever producing the world and necessarily raising it to a better state? Do you not feel it ridiculous to go and swear to Him some little thing, some small practice, abstinence, mortification, or I know not what mean, unworthy thing? Do you perchance take Him for a Director of nuns, a visible dispensator of *Paters* and *Aves*, a salaried auditor of lists of venial sins? You must think higher things of Him; you can never believe anything too great, anything too magnificent of Him. Think of that great movement of History, of that series of peoples who, in all quarters of the globe, have concurred to form a unique civilization, and to bring Man to his present point of perfection. Think of that unceasing formation of Worlds in Space, gradually peopled with living creatures and forming a divine chorus of beings ever more perfect and more beautiful! His action is there. Is not that what we have talked about a hundred times? And ask yourself, now, if your scruples are aught but derision. He governs all, and He acts within each one of us; but He acts by the inner movement, which turns us towards what is good, which forbids us ever doing anything dishonest, which makes us find our happiness in the perfection of others and in our own. You have never disregarded that sacred instinct which is His voice; you have therefore never

disobeyed Him, and you have nothing to fear. Note that I speak as the greatest of the Fathers of the Church would have spoken. You know that I have always respected your beliefs, even in the points wherein they differed from my own. I respect them still; it is not from Christianity that I seek to turn you, but from Impiety. To debase God is Impiety. The religion I am now showing you is that of Fénelon, of St. Clement, of St. Athanasius; it is that of all noble souls. Do not prefer to it I know not what bigoted mysticism, what puerile superstition, hardly worthy of a peasant who has become a Capuchin or of some poor girl taken in her ignorance from the fields to the cloister. Religion, though one, differs with different minds. Some interpret it well, and on it feed generous feelings, exalted hopes, great thoughts. Others falsify it and make of it a combination of kneeling, processions, penances, vows, ridiculous practices, tending to destroy health, to injure the intelligence, and to banish peace of mind. Religion, like all great things, should result in doing good; judge of your religion by the harm it has done you.

To Édouard de Suckau.

November 23, 1851.

DEAR ED.,—I have written such innumerable letters since I have been here that you must excuse my delay. I am far from feeling a blank, like you, old fellow; the truth is that I hardly know which way to turn. I began by undertaking a mass of work, so as to be sure to avoid *ennui*, that uncomfortable guest. I think I have avoided it too well. Still, everything is all right, my health as well as my researches. I find all the more pleasure in my

lonely Sunday and Thursday evenings, allowing my memories and my hopes to trot round my brain, cavalcading, as you know, through the Possible and the Impossible. What a good thing it is to have a home of one's own! Call me landlord if you like! The fact is that with a fire, a piano, books, and some tobacco, *ennui* departs, and company is unnecessary. Music, as Luther used to say, is the finest thing in the world after Theology. And the crackling of the flame, the blue and sinuous clouds of cigarette smoke! The most Oriental, the most fantastic imaginations dance before my eyes. Why are you not here, dreaming with me, comfortably ensconced in an arm-chair? I assure you I have a remarkable talent for making coffee; it is inborn in my family. My late grandfather, whose books and notes I have here, spent his later years in smoking, philosophizing, and making coffee. You really should be here, dear brother! Do, do come for New Year's Day, if you can; I dare not hope to see Madame de Suckau (Ed. de S.'s mother); I am afraid she will not be with you long enough. But when you are alone! I shall burn candles before the Holy Virgin to make you come.

No news to tell you about myself. I see nobody; I have twice had some music at Mme. la Principale's. I have no wish to see any of my colleagues. I wrote a polite letter to M. Jules Simon, who answered in a kindly manner.

My pupils work and understand. I shall give them a five months' course of Psychology.

My class takes me an hour and a half every morning on the average. I have seven hours for myself, plus Sundays

and Thursdays; I have to give that time to my class, because I write an analysis of each lesson, which I dictate to them, and which they can use for their reports, finding in it the exact formulæ.[1] I advise you to do the same thing; it is a very good system. They see the same subject four times—1° they hear the lesson; 2° they write a report on it; 3° they have those reports read and corrected in the class; 4° I make them argue on the subject of the previous lessons, one of them expounding, and the other correcting the first when he goes wrong. I shall take all those analyses to Paris and make use of them for my *agrégation*. But do you know, I am a little afraid that all this work may harm me. My personal observations lead me every day to more settled theories, more original formulae. The more I live, the more I am becoming myself. Can I don the official skin if necessary? The tips of my ears will appear more distinctly every year, and Donkey-boy Portalis will beat the ass back to the mill. Add to that the remembrance of last year, prejudices which I shall have to overcome next year. Well, one more trial! If I perish, we will consult together as to whether I should try for literature. I was thinking about it a month ago. It is the approach of the new year, and the probable chance of a new jury, which decided me.

I am reading Hegel's *Logic*.[2] It is an analysis of the

[1] See Appendix III., the syllabus of this course.

[2] The notes on the *Logic* fill 130 pages. M. Taine had thought of it as a subject for a thesis. The following are fragments from them:

"Points to be treated—

"1, Object of Metaphysic; 2, Possibility; 3, Method; 4, Utility; 5, Exposition and Criticism of Hegel's principal definitions (*Encyclopædia*).

principal possible modes of being; the definitions are arranged in order, and one engenders the other. It is, with that of Aristotle, the only Metaphysic that exists. I am pretty forward with a work on Sensations, and make most curious discoveries. Our École, really spiritualistic at bottom, neglected this point, which might harm it, showing, as it does, the relations between the soul and the body. Note that it comprises the interior central sensations, or Images, conscious objects in all the superior operations of the mind. They are endowed with particular forces and relationships, which no one has studied. That is my world, and I join you there, since we tackled all this together; psychology is our rendezvous. Will you, like me, write a *historical* Theodicea? Dear friend, what happiness it would be to be united in our beliefs, as in our sentiments! I must own that the more I consider the official God, the more he seems to me a man, a king, and the more unsatisfactory I find him. What an admirable saying that is of Rabelais': "There is a sphere of infinite intelligence, the

"To seek theoretically: I. What should be the elements of Metaphysical expressions—1, The unique abstract Being (the Being plus the negation); 2, the number of abstractions; 3, the mode of junction of the abstractions. II. If the three only possible ones are not: 1, Extension; the Being determined purely by quantity; 2, Life, production by differential negations of isolated units within this non-unit; 3, Thought, or the suppression of the above multiplicity and differences."

Another undated plan divides the work into four parts: "1, Object of Metaphysics or Logic; 2, Exposition of the work in the shape of a classification; 3, Exposition of the work in historical shape; 4, Criticism." M. Taine also wrote 70 pages about Hegel, arranged on a different plan, and equally undated.

centre of which is everywhere and the circumference nowhere." Pascal plagiarized it and spoilt it.

Memory, your thesis subject, seems to me beautiful and wide. I do not like the other so much.[1] It is too extensive, the Latin is unworthy of it. Take something historical, some misunderstood point in a philosopher. I have studied Memory a little; you can have anything of mine that you like. Tell me what you find.

Remember me to Libert. Edmond has answered my letter; he cannot tear himself from his life of pleasure.

Good-bye, my Ed. I commend you to the real God. Anatole has written me a magnificent letter[2] concerning Him.

To his Mother.

December 5, 1851.

I have written to M. N., who has answered by an affectionate but masterful letter. I had, for want of anything better to say, amused myself by sending him some epigrams against the amiable people who have stuck me in this hole. I was counting on his quality of a heretic and a railer to excuse me, but it seems that every man about the age of forty becomes indifferent; the least joke frightens a well-established *bourgeois*; if it is against the powers that be, it exhales the scent of powder and shot. He advises me to eschew *violence and insults*, to fight the enemy with *honourable* and *chivalrous* (!) weapons only, and to beware of *treachery* and *poisoned arrows*. He reproaches me with having *begun the battle against the clergy* without remorse

[1] M. de Suckau was thinking of writing a Latin thesis on "Law."

[2] Gréard, p. 177.

and without *respect*, and so on. He seems to look upon me as upon a sort of infernal machine ready to burst, and implores me not to set fire to the wick. I who am the most lamb-like of lambs, the most sedentary of bears, the most cloistered of dormice!! Whoever lives and thinks a little frightens those who are dead to thought.

You know the political news. I have seen people just returned from Paris; the troops are for M. Bonaparte, the dissolved Assemblée is unpopular, every one is quiet. It is evident that he will take Royal power with Republican forms. Country people favour him; the Democrats have been persecuted and overwhelmed for the last two years; no one will move. We shall have some years of it. France has for the last sixty years been swinging like a pendulum from Monarchy to Republic, from liberty to authority; it will go on a good deal longer. We are too Democratic, and yet not enough so, to put up with the one or the other, but liberal ideas are sinking deeper and more firmly every day. After seven or eight revolutions they will prevail. After last century's Monarchy-sickness, this century finds us convalescent, but with relapses, and it is only in the next that we shall recover our health. We must get used to it, and have patience; our children will be happier than we.

The Rector and the Principal heard me lecture yesterday, and the Rector was most complimentary about it.

I live very much alone; my fire, my books, and my piano amuse me when my head aches with work.

There is a library here, where I find a few history books; on Sunday and Thursday evenings I read over those I have brought. I am told that the theatre is bad. The

posters show that they chiefly play maudlin and blood-curdling dramas; I do not go, it would only sicken me.

Our year at the École was the last of sound thought. My friends write that the newcomers are all clericals; the sanctuary itself is invaded now.

For my part I am happy, except for a few inevitable troubles. I have nothing to wish for. I am engaged in noble and exalted occupations, I am increasing my store of knowledge; I live with Science, the greatest Science. I have good health, friends, enough money, few needs. What more do I want but to see you?

To Édouard de Suckau.

December 9, 1851.

DEAR ED.,—It was *a priori* certain that we should all think alike. It was thought at first that the ballot would be public, and that whoever refused to acquiesce would be discharged. I had quite decided to go and give private lessons in Paris. Or else you and I (considering our purity of living) might have founded a Young Ladies' College! But all these fine projects are fallen, since the ballot is secret.

No protest allowed! We are atoms; we should be as ridiculous as the Carpentras townsmen marching on Paris!

Great bodies and great personages alone can protest. But we need not submit or give our adhesion if it is asked for; we can vote rightly as all men of honour will do. That will be my conduct, and yours also I think.

The same mean cowardice appears at Nevers as at St. Étienne. I have seen and heard people, who used to abuse and insult M. Bonaparte, now say openly that they would

vote for him because otherwise they might lose their situations, owning to a similar rule for their general conduct. Stupidity, violence, ignorance and cowardice are the ingredients which the Creator mixed together when manufacturing the human race.

The mob has taken Clamecy, a little town fifteen leagues from here; they burnt and pillaged the place and murdered some gendarmes. Some regiments have arrived from Paris, with guns; it will be a butchery. What an ugly thing is politics! People in high places steal public liberty, shoot down four or five thousand men and perjure themselves; the lower classes, their adversaries, steal private property and cut throats. I would rather lose my right hand than give it to either; I dare wish success to neither side. Which is best, a Presidency *à la Russe* or the *Jacquerie* of the secret societies? The victory of the people might mean pillaging and certainly civil war. They would attain power whilst full of fury and cupidity, but without a single idea to guide them, or else being divided between four or five absurd or discredited systems. I can but wish for the triumph of an idea, and on either side I see but contempt of Right and brutal violence. M. Bonaparte is not worse than the rest. The Assemblée hated the Republic more than he does, and would, like him, have violated oaths in order to put Henri V or the Orleans on the throne, or M. Changarnier in power. Do you think that M. Carvaignac or other honest men have any authority in France? Right is nothing; there are but passions and interests. Dear friend, nothing can drag us from this mire save Science, Literature, Education, and the slow progress of ideas. I am resigned to belong to no party

for many years, to detest them all, to ardently wish for the advent of the only one worth following, that of science and honour. In the meanwhile, I live in Philosophy. Therein is the altar and the sanctuary. *Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena*: there you and I can meet and join hands.

Neither Anatole [Prévost-Paradol] nor any of the others has written to me. Did Edmond keep quiet? Is he really off to Greece? Nobody writes to me; the buried *Nivernais* is forgotten. The Pantheon has just been given back to worship. It was evident from the first day that M. Bonaparte would lean on the clergy. First, in memory of his uncle; then through a wish to have the support of that body, the last powerful one left in France. He will lean upon everything that is antagonistic to thought: the brutal discipline of the Army, the selfishness and cowardice of landlords, the legends of the country, the clergy—that great stifler. The epaulette will defend the cassock. Will there be an *agrégation*? If so, M. Veuillot will preside. *Dii Bonii!!*

Write to me; your letter was but six lines and does not count. Ah! if I could see you at Christmas! Answer me also about that.

What an excitement there must be at the École! Here every one is dead alive. Dear Ed., I think that this power will become firmer; the longer I live, the more I realize that ideas are not yet ripe. Those young men who are Liberals are too violent, and when they grow older and calmer they necessarily turn into *gendarmes*. Most of them deny any principles—say that Might is Right, and that Politics need only consider interests. The boldest say this; nearly all think it. We who have lived

in the cloister have learnt to believe in ideas and to love them.

Yours.

To Prévost-Paradol.

December 15, 1851.

DEAR FRIEND,—The Nièvre is quiet; Clamecy and five or six towns which had taken to arms have been reduced. There has been a good deal of shooting; many prisoners taken. It is said that the insurgents murdered and pillaged; our proclamations represent them as brigands, not as Socialists. How much truth is there in all this? It is certain that the department was ready for a general rising. Nevers and Moulins were well guarded, and the thing failed.

Those who were more deeply implicated will go and civilize Nouka-hiva.[1] It also seems certain that this country is full of secret societies, disciplined to passive obedience, and ready to fight through hatred and for their own interest, rather than for a principle. Édouard writes that at St. Étienne there is a similar state of things.

Between the knaves above and the knaves below, honest, thinking people will find themselves crushed. I feel too much disgust for both to associate with either. I detest robbery and assassination, whether committed by the mob or by the authorities. Perhaps our children, more fortunate, may have both science and liberty at once.

As to the Government, I think it will last. It has the

[1] This island in the Pacific had in 1850 been destined by the French Government to receive transported convicts; the idea was abandoned however.

Army with it; it has already made advances to the clergy; the provinces will give it an enormous majority. The trades and the great landowners wish for nothing better than a Russian kind of State, and what is worse, I see a number of young men who think likewise. We are not the outcome of a century of ideas, like the men of the French Revolution. Our Philosophy, an illegitimate offspring of Christianity, is nothing outside our Schools, and it is now the fashion to mock at principles and to defy facts. The Socialistic philosophers have invoked as a principle Love, which was a good thing in the mystic times of Christ; they have attacked the independence and the divinity of the individual, which is contrary to the whole modern movement; they have preached material comfort, which produces Jacqueries, but not Revolutions. I therefore see nothing that can stand against a man supported by 400,000 bayonets, 40,000 censers, and all the old country legends. If he is not stupid he will observe a happy medium, abstain from disturbing established customs, speak of his love for the people, and subsist on that; he will perish, but only when a doctrine is proved, preached, accepted, and propagated to such an extent that its adepts become capable of seizing power.

Is not this what we have had for fifty years? Napoleon, the Bourbons, Louis Philippe, M. Louis Bonaparte, are but compromises born of circumstances. The Idea itself, in '89 and in '48 only reigned for a moment, and by accident. It will only reign when it becomes a religion for all; one religion is not quickly substituted for another. What recriminations did not M. Proud'hon excite when he put Man's divinity in the place of the divinity of God!

We must wait, work and write. We alone, as Socrates said, are busy with true politics, i.e. with science. The others are mere clerks or tradesmen.

Do you know anything of Edmond? He does not answer me. What did he do in all this upset? Is he going to Greece? And Planat?

Here, my dear fellow, I see nobody. I hear and pronounce words in conversation, but they are but alternate sounds. I am without friends, family, museums, theatres and conversations, and my life is somewhat austere. I do not eat my heart out, as Homer says, but I am sometimes sad, and I want you. Surrounded with the dead, I yearn for the living.

I am every day more astonished at the universal numbness and flatness. I did meet a few young men, but I soon dropped them, for I prefer my solitude to their company. I should be very happy if I could have one of you here next year. Shall I ever have you? No better fortune could happen to me. My illusions depart day by day; stupidity, coarseness, a want of honesty are the rule; the contrary is exceptional.

I am reading the classics again, especially Homer and Marcus Aurelius, for Hegel makes my head ache, and my own psychological researches do not fatigue me much less. I now and then allow my thoughts to drift towards the future which sometimes seems bright and sometimes dark. Anyhow, we shall have done our duty.

I wrote to M. Vacherot without being sure of his address; he has not answered. Did he get my letter?

What do the new Catholic arrivals at the École say? Do they approve of the Revolution?

Solitude increases friendship. It seems to me that I now think of you with a tenderer recollection. Why does Planat forget me thus? Ideas are abstract; we can only reach them by an effort. However beautiful they may be, they are not enough for the heart of man. We can no longer have any Love properly so called. Only Friendship from man to man remains; nothing touches me more than to read of the friendships of the ancients. Marcus Aurelius[1] is my catechism; read it over again. You will find ourselves in it.

Good-bye, old fellow; or, as they say in Greek, χαῖρε.

To the same.

December 19, 1851.

Is it meant for a reproach?[2]

But then, the whole École is in the same case as I am, since we are all functionaries by the same title.

Did you only want to inform me of a noble action?[3]

Very well; observe, however, 1° that a professor is not a *préfet*, that he is a functionary of the State, not of the Government, and that it is not joining the latter to teach the history of Sesostris and Darius. M. Thomas might

[1] Marcus Aurelius was M. Taine's bedside book until his last days.

[2] Gréard, p. 181.

[3] Prévost-Paradol had copied and sent to M. Taine a letter which M. Thomas, a professor at the Versailles *lycée* had sent to the École Normale in order that it should be generally read in the University. M. Thomas had just sent in his resignation, and was about to accompany the Comte d'Haussonville into Belgium. In Brussels the two edited together a political paper, the *Bulletin Français*, which was clandestinely introduced into France. M. d'Haussonville returned to Paris in 1852, but M. Thomas remained in Belgium, a voluntary exile, until his death, in 1857.

have preserved his honour and his situation at the same time. 2° that this power, as yet illegal, will be legal within a week, being confirmed by six million suffrages. 3° that M. Thomas is the political editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and that his article of December 1 contained a violent attack against Authority. Is his resignation but a refuge against dismissal?

I am making ugly suggestions, am I not? But, in principle, I believe that the species Regulus is rare, and only to be dealt with theoretically.

I hold by my last letter word for word; I will give no adhesion to an action which I look upon as dishonest; but I think I can conscientiously continue to teach theories on the association of ideas or comparative judgment.

Be frank, and answer me otherwise than by another man's letter. Blame me if you like; I am the calmest man on earth, and we will discuss your blame together.

Not a word from Edmond or Planat?

How does Planat get on now that half his newspapers are suppressed? [1]

Ever yours, nevertheless, courtier or non-courtier, as you like.

To Mademoiselle Virginie Taine.

December 18, 1851.

You may read Voltaire's *Charles XII*, the *Siécle de Louis XIV*, and the *Essai sur les Moeurs*; they are his three great History works. If you want to laugh, look out in the index *Dr. Akakia's diatribe.*

[1] Émile Planat, under the name of *Marcelin*, drew caricatures for the *Charivari* and other illustrated papers.

Though you do not read politics, you know that M. Bonaparte, violating his oath, has confiscated public liberties, and caused the defenders of liberty to be put to death. Our rector (a priest!) sent us two days ago the following circular: "The undersigned, functionaries of Public Education at Nevers, declare that they adhere to the measures taken on December 2 by M. le Président de la République, and offer him the expression of their *gratitude* and respectful devotion." I refused to sign. Entrusted as I am with teaching respect to law, fidelity to oaths, and the cult of the eternal Right, I should have been ashamed to approve of perjury, usurpation and assassination. I would refuse again if the occasion arose again, and I am sure that you would all have done likewise.

My refusal is less dangerous to me, however, than I thought it would be. The rector, though weak, is kind and honest. He got the signature of the Philosophy Professor who is ill and on leave, and whose work I am doing, and sent the list without mentioning my refusal. I talked it over with him, and I think he really considers that I alone have done my duty.

All my friends decided to do likewise. Mme. N., urging her son not to risk his situation, but to submit to everything. Is it a mother's part to be more careful of her son's interest than of his honour? Others have done more and better than I; read the enclosed copy of a letter written by a Versailles professor to the Minister.

Otherwise, I am extremely prudent; the rector tells me that neither my class nor my conduct has given cause for the least complaint. I hold my peace, and I do everything which is compatible with honour, but nothing

more. Don't let my mother be alarmed; my honour is intact, and the rector himself does not think my post is jeopardized. Let us talk of less serious things. I am reading *Clarissa Harlowe* at the library; it rests me a little from metaphysics. I tried to get to know a young painter, but it turned out that his greatest pleasure consists in painting his dog, his sauce-pans, his stove, etc., life-size, like the sign of an inn. All my efforts at making acquaintances come to an untimely end in the same manner, and I am thrown back on myself. I live by my fireside; on Sundays and Thursdays I take a delicious rest between a cup of coffee and a cigarette; my studies are so fatiguing that I feel I never really appreciated rest before. For the last month the sky has been a mist and the earth a puddle, but yesterday sunshine and frost appeared, and I tramped out into the country, my heart gladdened by the sight of the great horizon and the beautiful, divine light. How often in the streets at night have I admired the deep shadows, and thought of Rembrandt and of you. If we were together, we would talk of your studies.

Sometimes this lack of friendship and conversation saddens me a little. You must forgive me, for I have lost everything at once, my family, all my friends, the École and Paris, those two homes of the intellect. But with a little effort, the sad feeling is dispelled; I take up a book. Montesquieu said that half an hour's reading was sufficient to make him forget the worst troubles in life.

To Édouard de Suckau.

December 22, 1851.

DEAR FRIEND,—Thank you, but I can't![1] 1° We shall only have three days' holiday; 2° If I went to Paris, my two uncles at Juvisy[2] and Poissy[3] would cut my throat, and rightly so, if I did not go to them. And my mother would not forgive me for not having taken an extra day to go and see her; she is dull, and would like to see me; 3° It is possible that I may have to go to Paris soon, against my will. The rector gave us the following sincere declaration to sign: "We, the undersigned, professors at the Nevers College, declare that we adhere to the measures taken on December 2 by the President of the Republic, and we offer him the expression of our *gratitude* and respect." All my honourable colleagues signed, but I was unfortunate enough to remain an exception, the atmosphere being heavy with threats of dismissals. So that I may any day go to Ghent for a change of air. The Government, loving liberty as it does, will probably desire to strengthen my virtue by removing temptations from me.

But I have your signed promise, and I shall have you on the Saturday, 2nd (45, Rue du Commerce). And I shall keep you as long as you will stay. I shall go through the most magnificent philosophical rosary, and you too.

* * * * *

You will see here a series of analyses on Sensations,[4]

[1] M. de Suckau had invited M. Taine to spend the New Year holidays in Paris, at his parents' house.

[2] M. Alexandre Bezanson. [3] M. Adolphe Bezanson.

[4] Of the sensations (observations), 98 pages. Plan: "Pre-

Images, the relations of pure Thought with the brain, and the nature of the *ego*, which will delight your heart. I now and then indulge in physiological [1] or historical [2] excursions, and I have read two volumes of that Chinese puzzle vulgarly called Hegel's Logic. I am like Cornelia, old fellow,

liminary enumeration of the questions—1, Of the sensations in particular, touch, sight, etc.; 2, Of sensation in general." Method: "1, To determinate the nature of sensation; 2, To apply this definition to the different kinds of sensations." Then follow minute analyses of personal experiments on Touch, Smell, Taste, Hearing, Sight, the nature of musical sound, imaginative sensation, images, associations of ideas, and memory.

[1] *Notes on Physiology and Natural History*, 93 pages, after Cabanis, Müller, Broussais, Bichat, Etienne Geoffroy St. Hilaire, Isidore Geoffroy St. Hilaire, Serres, Coste, Dumortier, Bérard, Carus.

[2] *General Ideas on History*, 32 pages. " . . . The object of History is to discover laws or general facts; psychology assists it. . . ." "To note the means by which nations are individuals." "Add physiological and climacteric causes. A son owes his nature to his father, and to the climate. . . ." "A definition should be given: 1° Of the *Government* and its different functions, War, Justice, Tax-gathering, Administration; of the *Bodies*; 2° of the *State* and its different possible classes, priests, aristocrats, populace, agriculturists, tradesmen; 3° of the *Family* and the relationship of its different members; 4° of *Art*, *Religion*, *Philosophy*, etc." An analysis of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* follows (38 pages), *id.* of Religion, and *id.* of Law. In the middle of the analysis on the State, the work is interrupted by this sentence: "3, Legislative power. The Prince, the functionaries, and the diverse classes take part in it, . . . it is needless to go on. Poor Hegel! this is humiliating for Philosophy. Aristotle did show the right of the stronger when speaking to Alexander, but he did not show his political opinions. Hegel has no notion of right, of individual will and inviolable person; he knows but what is good, reasonable, better. Will is sacred, even when it wills the worst. There is in his book a bad mixture of right and of politics. Right is *a priori* a geometry; politics are an empiricism."

my offspring are my jewels . . . intellectual offspring, I mean; of course!

I imagine that you too are in love but with our cold deities. Cold is the word, dear old man! Now and then a transient fire burns suddenly in my brain at the sight of a metaphysical theorem. But it soon goes out for want of a co-philosopher. The duffers who surround me are not likely to add fuel to it, and my pupils have souls of pasteboard, which I may model perhaps, but never set on fire. . . .

I am writing nonsense because I am in the dumps at present. It happens to me when my head aches, and I have no resource but to laugh at myself and others, or to think, as you know, on my great stoician consolation (*To die, to sleep,*[1] which my psychology confirms more and more). Now as I am not at heart a Buddhist, and as the contemplation of the pure zero becomes fatiguing, I amuse myself by being silly. "Life is an infant which must be rocked to sleep." Conclusion: come and eat my soup on Saturday, the 2nd, and see my clock, and my pictures (representing the execution of an Italian brigand, destined to terrify bad tenants by showing them the consequences of misconduct; also a tender shepherd stealing a nest for his Estelle, a picture ordered by the police to soften ferocious souls). Why, it softens *me* to tears!!

Come, my Nemorin, come to your Estelle!!

[1] In English in the original.

PROFESSORSHIP

To his Mother.

December 24, 1851.

I leave my Hegel and my scribblings to come and talk to you. I am tired and can find no better rest than thoughts of you. In this great, indifferent world which surrounds me, and where I have to fight a battle at each step to make my way, there is a little corner where I have three dear ones. . . . The good times in Paris will never come again.

M. Vacherot has written to me [1] recommending to me those amusements which are permitted to a philosopher, i.e. music and dancing. Music, certainly; Clementi and Mendelssohn are divine. But dancing!! I am becoming more and more contemptuous, more and more of a hermit. I quite intend this winter to let the Nivernese wriggle without me through that hopping turkey's dance, vulgarly called the polka. Every one has his pleasures. An honest middle-class angler is happier when he catches a tiny carp than the most marvellous society dancing man in the midst of his most fascinating evolutions. I angle in the river of philosophy (backbiters might say that I

[1] Letter from M. Vacherot, December 19: "Serious and exalted minds, unable to speak or to write about politics, under the military and *popular* régime which is imposed on us, will have to take refuge in pure science and philosophy. Do then translate Hegel whilst studying for your *agrégation*; it is the most urgent service that you can render to French philosophy just now. Take care of your health. . . . Aristotle declares that the mind in itself is indefatigable, and that it is its contact with the body which makes it subject to fatigue. I doubt it . . . the mind needs rest. . . . I recommend to you all the pleasures permitted to a philosopher, and particularly music and dancing. You know that the wisdom of the ancients did not shrink from it."

angle in muddy waters); and a small truth dragged from the bottom of the water makes me happy for the rest of the day. Sometimes I have headaches, moments of weakness, when my solitude palls upon me. But what sky is without its clouds? Taking it altogether, my life is to be envied. I earn in a short time what is necessary for my living. I enjoy good health; I am amassing for the future. Though I am buried like a mole, like it, I make my way. I must not think of what I am, but what I shall be. I live in the future; I prepare for it; the present is nothing. The more obscure I am, the more absorbed in my work, the greater are my chances. I compare myself with those who govern France, and I think without vanity that I have every reason to hope.

Nothing new here; I think that the rector was right, and I am not in danger. I shall continue until the holidays to keep my sixteen little canaries in my licensed cage.

To Prévost-Paradol.

December 30, 1851.

DEAR FRIEND,—I have about decided to become your competitor.

I am awaiting a letter which will settle my intentions. You understand that I must know for certain what is going on in high quarters, and whether the philosophy *agrégation* has any chance of being re-established. I wished at first to abandon *agrégations* and to go up for my doctorate at the end of the year. I shall give up philosophy but at the very latest extremity, and I shall become a

slave to Greek and Latin exercises, but in the hope of going back to it one day.

If, as you say, competition with me makes you tremble, you can well afford it! Dried up and hardened as I am by several years of abstractions and syllogisms, where shall I find again the ease and graces of the Latin style, and the Greek elegance necessary to order not to be submerged by eighty rivals and to arrive abreast of Maxime Gaucher, Sarcey, you, etc.?

I am going to dig in my neglected soil; you know how hard. If, as it is probable, I meet the same fate as last year, I shall be quite innocent of it. I shall do all I can to keep afloat. May Cicero help me.

I am counting on you a little; send me some information as to the books I must read, etc. . . . Talk to me of Babrius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, of the history of ancient metres, and other pretty things. I may perhaps send you a Greek exercise for you or M. Benoît to correct. Give me an arm! I have had one fall and am still bruised.

Will you ask Ed. to buy me a little 1f. Virgil, German edition, and bring it to me? Happy Ed. But it is better that he should be *agrégé* than I, for I may perhaps find again my Ciceronian periods and defunct hexameters. His happiness consoles me. Let him give me at least a good half-day, and tell me all about you.

M. Simon has just answered a line I had written him. His letter shows strong condemnation of M. X. What had the other done?

Let us pass on now to your last letter but one.[1] I purposely did not mention it before. The events seemed

[1] Gréard, p. 181.

to have irritated you. Your words were gentle, but the tone signified: "My friend Taine is a half-coward who soothes his alarmed conscience with sophistries." However, I imagine that that idea was only transitory, for you would not have such a creature for a friend. I do not think that I am doing myself too much honour or asking too much of you, when I desire you to believe that if my duty had required it in the least, I should have gone to Paris to hunt for private lessons. It was handling the question rather roughly to call sophistries reasons which you did not refute. Are you so unfaithful to your own principles that you do not now recognize M. Bonaparte for a legitimate sovereign. His action remains detestable. But here he is, the elect of the nation, and what has a partisan of the universal suffrage to say against the will of the nation? The seven million votes do not justify his perjury, but they give him the right to be obeyed. The middle class have been cowards, and the peasants stupid; yes, but let us respect the nation, even when it is misled.

Let us suffer on account of one great principle, but let us defend it nevertheless. Otherwise I do not recognize you, and I do not know how to make you agree with yourself. As to the distinction between the State and the Government, between a *préfet* and a professor, it is the only means of bringing justice into the administration. We are functionaries of the State and not of such and such a Government, and we teach the same things under M. de Montalembert as under M. Barrot or M. Ledru-Rollin. We serve the public, and not the reigning opinion. A prefect, on the contrary, is the agent of the present Government and the enemy of the others. He must resign

when his chief falls. He cannot become the agent of his chief's adversaries against him. The professor keeps his place, like a magistrate or a village policeman, because he acts neither for nor against the Government. If these principles were adopted, the administration would become honest and independent, whilst it now presents but cowardice and suffering consciences. Forgive this *dirge* as you call it. I will now provide you with weapons against me: 1°, The *préfet* is effacing the words "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" from the public monuments; the "Liberty" trees are being cut down and the wood distributed amongst the poor; 2°, all our honourable colleagues have signed an adhesion to December 2. Would you believe it? They are nearly all Republicans, and say they are. I see that Fillias and Challemel-Lacour have been dismissed. Is it because they refused to sign? that would be a presage. Then I would run up to you in Paris and we would work together.

Tell Ponsot I shall soon answer him. Good Lord, let him go in for medicine. Happy man, he will be independent if he can wash off his official psychology.

Real, free psychology is a magnificent science upon which is founded the philosophy of history, which verifies physiology and opens up Metaphysics. I have made many discoveries in these three months, and I have read two volumes of Hegel; I had never advanced so far in philosophy. And to give it up! To string hemistichs and to tremble before a barbarism! How sickening it would be! Tell Suckau to go and see Delacroix's big picture at the Apollo gallery. I hear it spoken of with enthusiasm. I was not able to go and see you; I only had three days' holiday.

To his Mother and Sisters.

January 1, 1852.

It was written in the celestial archives that I should be a Professor of Literature, and that sooner or later I should again become a faithful worshipper of the Greek language. The Philosophy *agrégation* is suppressed for this year,[1] and probably for ever if we are to believe the enclosed letters. I have come to a decision, and after to-morrow I shall heroically begin to prepare to pass in Literature. I have books here, I shall work with the Rhetoric Professor; my plan is all made out. I hope to find enough time to get together materials for my thesis and doctorate. You can imagine my vexation, but I have made up my mind to give way to necessity, and now I dream of success.

Thank you for approving of my conduct. What is going on is not likely to make me friendly towards the Government. M. Jules Simon has been suspended for a lesson on the Principles of Morality; it is indeed evident that to speak of Right or of Duty is a mode of criticizing the Government. Things are going towards the re-establishment of the Inquisition and it will soon be impossible to write or to think in France. As I expected from the first, M. Bonaparte will give everything to the bishops in order to gain their support. He will do penance for his sins on our backs. So be it. *Te Deum laudamus.*

By the bye, we went in a body to hear a *Te Deum* to-day. What monkey play! I am always inclined to ask myself,

[1] Gréard, p. 184. Letter from M. Fortoul to M. Michelle: "Sir, the present teaching staff being sufficient for actual needs, I have decided that there should be no *agrégation* competition this year for philosophy classes."

What the deuce is being acted here? I prefer the opera, the actors know their parts better and the supers are less ugly. After that we went to pay the official calls on the prefect and the general. The general said, à propos of the Clamecy insurgents: "If they had not run away I should have paved the streets with them; God would have chosen the good ones." It is the saying of the Abbot of Cîteaux during the Albigense war: "Kill them all, God will know his own." Mitred assassins and medalled cut-throats, they are worthy of one another. The prefect added, "I shall keep as many as I can in prison, and try to send most of them to Cayenne." What a paternal Government; it is quite touching! It is better to be nothing as I am, or suspended, than to be a gaoler or a licensed butcher.

It is something not to be an executioner! I prefer my old black coat to a gold-embroidered one stained with blood.

But there is no need to worry; it seems that my refusal to sign will have no consequences. As to my post, I am not sure that the incumbent will not return to it at Easter. I shall not have a chance of communicating with him about it for some time.

I am so glad that my sisters so well understand what I have read to them. Would you believe it, M. B., who is an intelligent, witty, cultured man, blamed *Julien's* story (Stendhal's *Rouge et Noir*), calling it exaggerated, unnatural, and saying that he had never seen anything at all like it.

Dear girls, do not trouble about the technical details and geographical particularities that school-trained parrots can rattle off by heart. Be sure of your spelling, arithmetic and the essential part of geography. Trust

for the rest to your reading, conversations and meditations. The aim of Education is to open the mind, to bring forth ideas, and the habit of thinking. Study is but a means. A woman need not pass an examination before going into society; she is not questioned in a drawing-room as to a date or a chemical solution. She knows enough, and the cleverest man can take pleasure in her conversation, if she has ideas about everything, if she can follow any conversation, and if her judgment is free and broad enough to allow her to have an opinion on any questions of morality, conduct or religion which may be submitted to her. A conversation which is a mere exchange of dates and facts is but a wearisome dialogue between pedants. A conversation which is an exchange of ideas brightly expressed is perhaps the greatest pleasure to be met with, and it is within reach of any thinking person, without great learning. The only examination a woman has to pass is on the subjects of dress, manners, dancing and music, and I see that you are very well qualified for it.

To Prévost-Paradol.

January 10, 1852.

Édouard has only just sent me your letter. Since it is dated on the 3rd I imagine you were away from the École and on your return found the one I wrote on December 30, or is it lost, I wonder?

In any case, my dear fellow, how can you think me foolish enough to refuse you a freedom which I take for myself? Do I generally get easily offended? At the École,

was I supposed not to brook contradiction? You may contradict me, attack me, blame me, refute my arguments; I will discuss with you and love you the better for your openness. I must say your letter hurts me. How could you think I wished to break a five years' friendship? Never in future have such ideas; never speak to me of "taking your hand away from mine"; write at once to apologize for those horrid words. We have been brothers in philosophy, in politics, in literature, our two minds were born together, one by the other, and it seems to me that I should lose the whole of my past life if I were to lose you.

But you must put up with a similar openness on my part, when I tell you that I am sorry for your revulsion. It is not for a philosopher to change his doctrine with circumstances. The chain of reasoning which justified universal suffrage is unchanged, and Truth has remained the same. If there are, as you say, seven million beasts of burden in France, those seven millions have a right to dispose of what belongs to them. No matter if they choose to govern wrong. The veriest oaf has a right to dispose of his field and private property; and, similarly, a nation of fools has the right to dispose of itself, that is of public property. Either you must deny the sovereignty of human will and the whole nature of Right or you must obey universal suffrage.

Note, however, that there are restrictions to the above, which I formerly used against you when I denied to the majority the absolute power which you conceded to it. It is because there are things which are outside the social contract, which are therefore beyond public property,

and thus escape the decision of the public; for instance, liberty of conscience and everything that we call the rights and duties anterior to society. But in the present question, in the choice of a form of government, the national will is obviously a sovereign one; and we cannot better prove our loyalty than by defending our principles, even when the imbecile masses use them against us.

Otherwise you march straight to tyranny. The Emperor of Russia might say, "I am the only intelligent man in my realm" (which is true, by the way). "Therefore it is my will which must govern and not that of my subjects." The Catholics say, "We alone know the true end of man, and our adversaries' science blinds them more than ignorance could do. Therefore our will must govern." Pascal's saying is decisive: "Who is to be first? the most learned? but who is to judge? He has four lacqueys, I have but one; he must pass before me. It is a question of numbers, and I should be a fool to dispute it."

I will not repeat to you the old utilitarian arguments. Between men like you and me, the only arguments which count are those of justice. The question reduces itself to this: Do you admit, with Rousseau, that human will is inviolable concerning that which legitimately pertains to it? If not, you deny Right. The real solution would be the education of the people; they will have it in a hundred years. But, for God's sake, let us defend their rights even against ourselves, whilst wishing and trying to enlighten them.

Good-bye, dear enemy, with much love.

Is not Edmond going to Greece? Which are the grammarians of the eighteenth century who are inspired by

Dionysius of Halicarnassus ? [1] I am writing some Latin verse ! ! "

To Édouard de Suckau.

January 15, 1852.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I expected you for my New Year ! At five o'clock on Saturday afternoon I had placed your arm-chair by my fire, looking forward to spending the evening with you and seeing you off the next day. *Dis aliter visum.*

The New Year begins sadly for me. I shall waste a great part of it preparing a doubtful *agrégation*, doubtful I say, in spite of all your flattery. Marot, Prévost, Gaucher, Dupré, Sarcey, etc., are going up, and philosophy dries up one's style and throws one's ideas outside the common stream. And, if I deserve to pass, will they let me ? An old ultra-Catholic maiden aunt of mine, in the Ardennes, writes me a metaphysical letter, intended to bring me back to the right track, talking to me of Spinoza, saying that I confessed to atheism at the *agrégation*, etc. . . . the whole thing inspired by her priests. You see, calumny and espionage are far-reaching ; I am a notorious miscreant, and perhaps I shall be expelled from literature

[1] Extract from a short analysis of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, entitled " Of the Expression," and to be found in the same note-book as " General Ideas on Literature and Art " : " The general law is this : the concrete receives from the abstract its intellectual form. This theory of the expression is magnificent, and has some prodigious applications. Every language, every art, every science, the whole human interior, every form of matter in the organic and inorganic world, the All itself, which is the highest abstract form expressed in the concrete."

as I have been from philosophy. Yet I will try again, half-consoled beforehand, for I really wonder at the very little that is needed to live on; I have more than I want with 1,615 fr. This is why: there is no theatre here; I would pay rather than go to the dens they call cafés; I have been to those crushes they call dances or evening parties, and have given them up so as not to die of heat and boredom; I will know nothing of Nevers but my own fireside. Working and cigarette smoking are not expensive; I am therefore too rich; and as I can always procure those riches I can afford to laugh at the future. Prévost found two letters from me on his return to the École, and writes that he regrets the one you sent me. I am having a polemic with him on universal suffrage. As you say, he is English and an aristocrat, hence his politics; he is also too passionate to obey pure deductions. He frightens me. What is that talk of a possible general dismissal at the École and of an organic law on Education? Dear Ed., with him and About I am constantly on the alert; friendship is almost militant; with you I feel as if I were sitting in the École playground during the summer, peaceful and happy, with my head on your breast, do you remember?

It would take too long to tell you about my scribblings. I have written a great fat MS. on Sensation. Here is my doctrine, roughly: Nerves and the brain are the feeling *ego*, who is their unity, final cause, principle of duration and determination. Each sense contains in its essence a relation to a determinate mode of being of the Exterior—the eye with æther-vibrations, the hearing with air-waves, etc. . . . and its function is to receive and to reproduce the particular mode of action of that Exterior. Thereby do

constituted individuals, though separate and opposite, combine together and the *egō* unites with the *non-ego*. You know that from undeterminate and diffuse matter the tendency of Nature is towards individuality and separation. The essence of animality is to re-establish this primitive unity by a superior unity. But sensation, transmitted to the brain, there produces its image; so that it becomes capable of enduring after the action of the Exterior has ceased, to reproduce itself, to suffer the action of thought and to provide Science with material. That movement is the solution of the problem: "How to interiorize the Exterior." Then begins the rôle of Thought, which has no other object than the *ego*, and which, thanks to the curious mechanism of exterior perception, perceives the *non-ego* in the *ego*. This second movement is the solution of the problem: "How to exteriorize the Interior." But this is but one case of a more general law: the function of the brain in Memory is to reproduce past images and thus to make the past present; the function of the Mind, thanks to a theory of which you already saw a glimpse at the École, is to consider this present image as a past one. These two movements—opposite, like those of exterior perception—constitute Memory. If I were to develop this, I would show how this applies to Induction, to Reason, how the mind perceives the future in the present, the universal in the particular. The nature of the *ego* in general is to individualize the universal and to universalize the individual; it is an epitome of the All and has, through Thought, some relation to everything. The movement of nature consists in leaving its indetermination, which is worked out by separations, oppositions and

reciprocal limitations,—and in suppressing those limitations by a Being, at the same time individual and universal, having the unity of the first movement and the determination of the second.

I pass over a mass of researches and theories on colours, savours, contacts, odours, and especially sounds,—others on muscular sensations, the different modes of imagination, the relations of language to thought, etc. I shall talk to you about Hegel, but not before the holidays.

What a misfortune is mine, dear friend! I was sailing like a vessel down the psychological incline, I was finding out all sorts of things, understanding M. Jouffroy, who sees a world in the soul, beginning applications to the philosophy of History—and I must come down to Latin hemistichs and Greek accentuations. I console myself a little by thinking that it will be an opportunity for me to go through a course of Æsthetics. I have already written various things on the Drama and the Epopœia.[1] But when shall I be free from all that and able to enter pure Metaphysics? *Magna Mater*! It is the Ocean of Beauty, closed to the profane, of which Plato speaks! As Louis XI said, "I have no Paradise in my mind but that one."

[1] A notebook, dated 1852, and entitled *General Ideas on Literature*, treats of the Epopœia, the Drama and the Ode; of the Ideal in those three styles (opening with this definition—The Ideal is the Real, purified); of Romance, and the Epic Poem; of Drama and Tragedy; Ideal in Poetry; Principle of the varieties and variations of Poetry; Rhyme and Rhythm; of Expression. At the end, a few pages on Sculpture, Painting, and Music. A *Comparison of the three Andromaches* (Euripides, Virgil and Racine), dated January 12, 1852, is a literary application of this work of analysis.

Good-bye my Stephanese. Nothing from Edmond; they say he is about to start. I am afraid he must be lost. You have dipped into Paris waters and are living again; vivify me!! *Tuissimus.*

To Prévost-Paradol.

January 18, 1852.

So we are starting on a polemic. It is not a bad thing, since political newspapers are suppressed. But I will not dispute longer than you like. Close my mouth when I bore you. My great love for discussion is quite benumbed now.

First of all, you must notice that you make use against me of a recollection [1] which is inaccurate. When I considered Louis XIV's monarchy as a legitimate one, it was not on account of the needs, but of the will of the people of that time. The King was loved, his power desired, with no reason, it is true—but sufficiently. It was a *tacit* universal suffrage. Remember what quarrels that work brought upon me!

The whole question between us depends on the opinion we have on the principle of Right. I said at the *agrégation*, and now I repeat it, that it is founded on *volition*.

Here is your phrase: "This principle, *perhaps* the only true one, that our rights are engendered and measured by the extent and nature of our needs, etc.

[1] Gréard, p. 186. Letter from Prévost-Paradol: "I have still, in some drawer or other, a note written by you, when in the Rhetoric class, in which you very rightly say that Louis XIV's France had to obey Louis XIV . . . where you lean on that principle, that the source and measure of Rights is the nature and extent of Needs."

Note also that you do not dare to state this thesis absolutely and that you restrict it by a *perhaps*. The rest of the letter is a development of the same idea.

Well, my dear fellow, here are the proofs in support of my opinion. If you wish to discuss seriously, refute them one by one and give the demonstration of your own.

1° Direct proof.—It is a fact of moral conscience, that, in presence of the volition of a man, bearing upon a thing which belongs to him, we are inwardly convinced that this volition is inviolable and that no one, under any pretext whatever, can prevent the action of this will. Here is a peasant, with his ground; he is foolish and sows it badly. I, who am learned, advise him with absolute reason to do otherwise. He is obstinate, and his harvest is spoilt. I should commit an injustice if I attempted to prevent him.

Here is a people who choose their government. Being foolish and ignorant, they confide it to a man of an illustrious name, who has done a wicked action and who will lead them to perdition; more, they deprive themselves of their liberties, their guarantees, and the means of educating and improving themselves. I am sorry and indignant; I do, through my vote, everything I can to prevent them. But this nation belongs to itself, and I should commit an injustice if I opposed that sacred and inviolable thing, its will.

(In my last letter, I made an exception of the things which are outside the State, such as liberty of conscience, and family duties. Not being in the public domain, the nation cannot dispose of such. But the mode of government is undoubtedly the public domain. So do not attack me upon that ground.)

2° Indirect proof.—If the enlightened minority has the

right of forcing the stupid majority, one enlightened man has the right of forcing the stupid unanimity, which is the justification not of royalty, but of tyranny.

If I am convinced that I alone am enlightened and all the rest stupid (which is the case with every man convinced of his opinion), I attribute to myself the right of forcing the whole nation. Hence the following pretty application: Suppose that M. Bonaparte is not accepted, but *rejected* by the people, and convinced that his ideas are the only just ones: he would act conscientiously in making himself a dictator before and against all, and should be considered a virtuous man. You attack him now that his power is desired by the people: you would excuse him if the people did not want him.

Lastly: (this is terrible: you did not answer it) The Catholics must believe that they alone are enlightened, or become heretics and be damned. Therefore they must believe that they have a right to override any resistance and to establish whatever they will. Philip II is excusable for his war of the Netherlands.

To sum up, as soon as you take it upon yourself to consider your adversaries as so many driven sheep, and to despise in them the sanctity of the human will, you give them the same right against yourself and you justify every injustice, since an injustice is no other than an attack upon a human will.

3° Refutation.—(Excuse this pedantry, but remember our Rhetoric copy-books; it is the only way to conclude.)

In fact, it is a fallacy to say that, when I see a man suffering from a physical or moral need, my conscience shows me in him a right to satisfy that need. A poor starving man

is to be pitied, and it is my duty to feed him, but he has not the right to take a loaf by force. A political man who needs political life, etc.; has not therefore the right of overthrowing the will of the nation which refuses it and to expel the Government which takes it. This is a fact of conscience; it is primitive. Deny it if you can; if not, your argument is destroyed.

I pass over other refutations. You know all that has been said against M. Louis Blanc. Read it; your principle is his.

My dear fellow, I live in the abstract, I know that, and it wants some courage to defend the cause of the enemy in the face of public misfortune and our private misfortunes. Perhaps if I were in politics, like you, the spectacle of what goes on would carry me against my principles; I understand you, but I remain an ideologist.

"Let the colonies perish rather than a principle." Indeed, I think the University *is* about to perish! M. Bonaparte's speech does not mention it at all, and omits it while praising all the other institutions of the realm. Well, my dear fellow, whatever happens, Science will always be wanted, and then, you know: "*Highlanders, shoulder to shoulder.*"

I wish you would kindly go and see Planat, and tell me something of him; I can get nothing out of him.

Tell Crouslé that I will answer him soon.

To his Mother.

January 27, 1852.

I asked the Rector the other day to sound the philosophy incumbent. The Rector wishes me to stay; but the other

is a perfect miser, who sups off a bloater bought at the grocer's, and who will perhaps wish to take back his 1,615 fr., the more so that at Easter he will only have three months' work before the summer, and it is very pleasant to receive a salary for doing nothing during the holidays. He is a cracked old pedant, with a stuttering jerky way of speaking; he gives no lessons to the boys, but merely dictates a programme to them. I know that my sixteen little birds wish to retain their keeper, and that they will not welcome the grumpy old owl if he chooses to take up his post again. To the grace of God—and of the owl.

I perceive from day to day that the number of great men is infinitely small. This place is a perfect Sahara as far as ideas are concerned. Stay, though, I went to the theatre yesterday for the first time. (I hate melodrama like poison, but it chanced that they were acting vaudevilles.) I discovered a most natural and talented comedian, but the wretched man starves with his company, and our ingenious Nivernese despise him on account of his profession.

In the morning I went to church, and I heard a most cutting diatribe against philosophy. We are in very bad odour, and it seems that the great pachas in the Administration intend to bring the celestial fire down upon Sodom and Gomorrah—beware of a smell of burning! My poor friends at the École are expecting a general dismissal. I am well out of it! If Philosophy and professors of Philosophy are suppressed, I am more fortunate than any one; Latin verses and Greek exercises have been flowing from me like living water, and the Dictionary's numbered flowers, epithets and synonyms are spread out over my

intelligence and fertilizing it. I am ten times better than my collaborator, the Rhetoric professor (this is vanity, is it not, but it is not saying much!), and I have many chances of success. I am disappointed, however, because M. B., who had promised to write to me on the general state of things, keeps absolute silence. It seems that the Coup d'État and the suppression of the Constitution—his political firstborn—have grieved him much. M. Bonaparte has unceremoniously struck out his whole parliamentary life.

Nothing new here or elsewhere. We are good *bourgeois*, like that Wakefield minister for whom all revolutions consisted in going from his white bed to his brown bed and from his brown bed to his white bed. Life is monotonous, and the pillow is always the same; let us go to sleep peacefully and dream fair dreams. I have beautiful dreams, my science—which I cultivate in my leisure hours—opens infinite horizons before me. I am building on solid hopes. Should I regret that my future should be that of a *savant*? there is no other future nowadays, politics and salaried posts being open but to servility. The only road in which it is possible to walk without being bespattered with mud is that of abstract discoveries. I should have been prevented from writing and speaking of the State, Duty, Right, etc. Who will prevent me from publishing what I shall have found out about nerves and sensations? Patience and courage are required, it is true, but one can remain honest whilst making progress.

PROFESSORSHIP

To Prévost-Paradol.

February 5, 1852.

Let us leave politics alone, since we agree upon principles. As to the consequences, if you can prove that the liberties taken from us have been stolen, I shall be delighted; it would be a consolation to be able to cry, "Stop thief!"

I would rather talk to you of business. Let us understand our future. You must see now that the man who is reigning has some chances of lasting. He very ingeniously leans upon universal suffrage, which will not ask him for liberties but for comfort. He has the clergy and the army. add his uncle's name, the fear of socialism and the divided opinions of the adverse party. Political life is therefore closed to us for ten years perhaps.

The only clear road is that of pure science or of mathematics; that is what we now have to count upon.

Well, my friend, see which is the best position from which to take up Literature or Science. In my opinion, it is the University, and for this reason: 1° It only requires four hours a day from us; 2° it makes us teach scientific or literary subjects; 3° I see by my own experience that it can be done conscientiously and honourably without being molested.

I do not know what sort of situation[1] you are looking for. If you had told me, I might discuss your intention more precisely. But I doubt if it could have such advantages. If you become a secretary, a tutor, a private teacher,

[1] Gréard, p. 189: "Hoping that the closing of the Ecole was about to set us free, I have set about looking for some modest post where I can have leisure to work quietly at my theses, against the far-distant day when the University becomes habitable again."

or the collaborator of some writer, you will have less freedom of mind, less leisure, more hindrances than in the University. Teaching is an excellent way of learning; I have found many new psychological truths whilst preparing my lectures. The only means of inventing is living constantly in one's special science. I have taken up a professor's career because I believe it to be the surest road to becoming a *savant*. The best books of our time had public lectures for their first material, and I see no other means nowadays of rising from obscurity than a good book on which one has worked for ten years. Add the extreme solitude, the necessity of constant thinking in order not to die of *ennui*, the lack of amusements. . . . All these disadvantages of a country town are helps to those who wish to make progress.

Do not imagine that you would be interfered with. When one abstains from political and religious allusions, and from attending the oratory of *cafés*, the authorities leave you alone. My rector is a priest; there is a bishop in the town who is an enemy to the college; my principal goes to church and takes the Communion; one of my pupils' father is a nobleman who reads all the boy's essays, and I know that there are no complaints about me,[1] though my psychology is physiological, and though I have much maltreated the *Raison* and the *Liberté*, one can say things without mentioning names; and I know from the History and Rhetoric professors that the parents themselves would be sorry to give the Père Loriquet's[2] books to their children.

[1] It will be seen further that M. Taine entertained some delusions as to the benevolence of his Nivernese surroundings.

[2] Père Loriquet, a Jesuit, b. 1767, d. 1845, wrote many elementary

They belong to this century in spite of themselves. They speak well of the little seminary by the city gates, but it would disgust them to make priests of their sons. One can teach them science, give them historical and philosophical facts, make them understand the most irreligious civilizations—those of Greece and Rome. The moral effect remains the same; it is enough not to formulate the consequences of it, or rather not to do so in newspaper phraseology. The parents are too stupid to see anything, and the boys, following the excellent inclinations of the excellent human race, are too much disposed towards revolt not to receive the spirit of it.

Religion and loyalty are now but superannuated customs; even for the most fanatical, Education prepares the coming world and destroys the past. Children are everywhere treated as their parents' equals; they are allowed to take part in conversation, treated like friends; their first impulses towards freedom are encouraged; from the cradle they breathe liberty and equality. Ask old people what their education was! We find accomplices in the parents; outwardly oppressed and apparently compressed, Education is at bottom as liberal as can be wished.

Those are my principal reasons, my dear fellow. Seen at close quarters, things are not so black as they are believed to be at the École. As to your fears for the *agrégation,* they are needless with your magnificent French and M. Dubois for a judge. Were you not first in Greek

books, one of which, a *History of France,* of an incredible and notorious partiality, was much in use in ecclesiastical boarding-schools under the Restoration.

at the licentiate exam. ? Your only serious competitors are Sarcey, Dupré, Gaucher, and Marot, and there are nine places. It is probable that the *agrégation* for Letters will last since it has been proposed. So here is another *but* to add to the *buts* which worry you.[1] What do you say to the hope of finding yourself next year with some of your friends, Édouard, Levasseur, Gréard, and another *whom I dare not name*, and who would be very happy, you may be sure. How we would sap away, old chap, if we could find some virgin soil to dig together in the solitude of the provinces ! There is some to be found everywhere. Do you remember the old times in the Rhetoric class ? I have never been so happy since.

I insist on your going, not to see Planat perhaps, but at least to inquire at his door whether he still lives there. His house is on your way when you go to your father's. I have written to him three times without getting any answer ! By the bye, you might write longer letters, you only write on three sides of the notepaper ! ! Remember that I read your letters three or four times ; I am deprived of any sort of conversation.

To Mademoiselle Sophie Taine.

February 15, 1852.

I am glad you are enjoying yourselves ; the home really is where one's relations are, and it is impossible not to be happy when one is so affectionately received.[2] I also have

[1] See Gréard, i. p. 190.

[2] Mme. and Mlles. Taine were at Sedan, staying with M. Auguste Bezanson.

known that charming hospitality; those days were amongst the pleasantest in my life.

Nothing new here; my life is perfectly monotonous. I may tell you that I am finishing the third volume of Hegel (the Logic), that I have prepared part of my thesis, and a quarter of my *agrégation*. Insipid news, and only fit for owls like myself. This owl of yours went the other day to the Préfecture ball and did not have the courage to dance in the crush. When I saw the eternal smile of the ladies and heard the honeyed words of their partners I found nothing better to do than to watch that mockery of pleasure, that comedy of *ennui*. People had come to the ball from twelve leagues away. I am still yawning from the effects of it; but having done my duty, I am now free.

I am still awaiting an answer from the incumbent of the Philosophy professorship. I am told that I shall probably remain, and it seems likely I shall not be able to go to Vouziers in August, my examinations will prevent it. There is one for August 20, and another for September 15 or 20. I shall be obliged to work in the interval. The future is uncertain. We depend on the caprice of the master, and we are awaiting his law on Education. Nobody doubts that there will be great changes in History and Philosophy. Will Education be placed in the hands of the Congregations or under the supervision of the Bishops? Will M. de Montalembert be our Minister? Our conjectures hesitate between all these possible misfortunes. We are the vanquished, and we naturally pay the costs. My friend Prévost wants to leave the Université. M. About has had the sense to go off to

Greece. I shall stay on as long as I am not dismissed. I have found in the library some books on Zoology and the *Artiste* newspaper. It reminds me of Paris, of the Exhibition, of painting and of music. It helps me to escape on Sundays from Nivernese prose. I spend the rest of the day at the piano, and I improvise; that is to say, I let my fingers wander into any chords or fancies which come to them. I often dream of other things whilst doing it, but it is an accompaniment for my ideas, and it is very sweet to think to music. But my mind is elsewhere. I cannot practise seriously or improve. I only look upon it as a relaxation, and I am glad to be a good enough pianist to play other things than quadrilles. Music is for others but a source of vanity, but I find pleasure in it.

To Prévost-Paradol.

February 22, 1852.

See how punctual I am; I answer you on the very day! Do not thank me for it, though; I am so lonely, so much in want of intercourse with a friend that I pounce on your letters as soon as they arrive, and read them over three or four times, so as to hear human language once again.

Alas, my poor friend, I, like you, am struggling in the most marshy depths of the bog of melancholy.

I am bored to an excess which you have never known. Happy man, you have Gréard![1] I feel how much you must love that dear, charming fellow. What would I

[1] Gréard, p. 191: "I have here a treasure which I use to excess: that is Gréard, my refuge."

not give for one day's conversation with some one like him or like you! But here I am everlastingly thrown back on myself, and I am not very good company, far from it! The execrable necessity of Latin dissertations and Greek accentuation holds me by the throat. When I return, tired and disgusted with the stupidity of the sixteen little duffers I am catechizing, I have to start on the *agrégation* again. I seem to be living backwards, and going back to school to write impositions and get my knuckles caned. And, far away in the background, glimpses of beautiful ideas, an infinite world beyond the Rhine, are beckoning to me, and I must let them fade in the darkness. Oh! what a life!!

I have not heard from Édouard; his last letter was dated January 8. Mine to him cannot have been stopped! It was about philosophy, and included the driest formulæ I have found in psychology. Not a word from Edmond. nor from anybody. I absolutely request that you should go to Planat's rooms and ask if he is still living there, and also that you should tell me if his paper is still going, and if he is earning his living. Perhaps, dear old friend, I may have in about five weeks the greatest pleasure I can hope for. It seems that the Rector has had the kindness and good taste not to mention to the Minister my refusal to sign that adhesion I told you about; he also wishes me to finish the year here—my commission is only for six months, you know. Well, he is going to ask the incumbent to prolong his leave for another six months. If I stay here, instead of being sent Heaven knows where, I shall take advantage of the Easter holidays to go and see my mother, and to spend a day in Paris. I shall let

you know when I am coming. You will take me to the Exhibition, and we will have a good talk—for I suppose that I have not had the same misfortune as poor N., and that you will not avoid me as a provincial pedant.

Whatever you may say, if we both were *agrégés*, the university life would be bearable. We should not be thrown into a hole of a communal *collége* like Nevers (you should not put *lycée* on your letters!), and there might then be a chance of meeting with a friend from the École. A congenial companion, solitude, leisure, no more *agrégations*, some philosophy and some natural history—think of that! It is my Promised Land, in the air of which I build thousands of castles, all by myself, alas, without a Gréard! How fortunate you are in having him, and what a lot of good Édouard, my patient consoler, did me, especially during the black days of my first year.

Poor old Édouard! I love him in silence and at a distance! Has he too forgotten me?

I read Musset and Marcus Aurelius to cheer me. A strange mixture, is it not? but I find all my troubles in the one, whilst the other speaks to me of the universal remedy, the great Thought of Antiquity, *τό μηδένεἶναι*.

It is the most efficacious antidote against spleen that I have yet found. It rests and soothes the soul, like the thought of bedtime during a tiring day. Add to it mechanical work which kills reflection and absorbs boredom in exhaustion. I know that I am thought to live the queerest life here, shut up day and night, with no society or pleasure. But it is the only sort of life I can bear.

I am looking forward to the spring which will bring some

beauty with it. For the last five months I have seen nothing but ugliness, muddy roads, narrow and dirty streets, no music, no pictures, no pretty faces. The trees and sunshine will make up for it all.

I wrote to N. because I had promised I should; he was more than friendly to me at the time of my *non-agrégation* and I owed him some courtesy. But I feel, as you do, that there is not much sympathy between us. There is no one here with whom to practise argumentation, and I cannot debate with myself; it is a great disadvantage, but after all, there are nine places, and . . . I will not think of the horrible necessity of working next year at a third *agrégation*. If you can, let me have a few hints as to books, etc.

I shall try and procure the number of February 12.[1] The author seems to write in every periodical!!! When will *Bernardin* receive a medal?

Did Edmond give you for me before he left a paper of mine about Greece? I will write to Ed. one of these days. Tell Crouslé to answer my letter.

To Édouard de Suckau.

February 25, 1852.

DEAR ED.,—Your last letter was written on January 8. What answer dare you make to such eloquent dates? Because, Sir, you are an illustrious Professor in an illustrious National or Royal *lycée*, do you attribute to yourself the right of forgetting the Nivernese lout whom you have honoured with your good graces. It is not likely that my

[1] Number of the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique*, in which Prévost-Paradol had published an anonymous article on M. de Montalembert's reception at the Académie Française.

last letter has been intercepted; their Lordships of the Post Office or of the Préfecture cannot have been very anxious to read the psychological abstractions that I was sending you.

You are not short of time; you have not, like me, two lectures a day, plus an *agrégation* to prepare. Has Stephanese soup the properties of the waters of Lethe? Prévost tells me that your correspondence with him is interrupted by Governmental curiosity. He wrote to you at the beginning of the month and has received nothing in return. Our letters stopped!!! We are pretty conspirators! Will Anatole's endearments and my syllogisms blow up the Government? It is not enough to be a master, one must also be a fool! What people, and what times! Anatole is sad *usque ad mortem*, discord reigns in his Section, he is disgusted with the University and desires to leave it; I send him magnificent and most parliamentary remonstrances, which he treats *à la* Louis XIV. I prove to him scientifically that no profession will give him enough to live on for three hours' work a day. He answers nothing and goes on. We live in different worlds which cannot touch each other—he in that of the nerves and I in that of the brain; he reasons electrically and I pedantically; he reasons with an irritated, rebounding sensitiveness and I with the phlegm of a Rector attended by the four Faculties. Nothing is more comical than that exchange of letters, neither of us answering the other. I understand him and approve of him; does he do the same concerning me? What does he tell you, or rather what *used* he to say? I agree with him that the *agrégation* is revolting, and I quail when I think that I may have to start again. Anatole is

deep in a new friendship, with our nice Gréard. They are lucky to be sad together. Dear Édouard, when can I tell you all my *θρῆνοι, oa, oa, oa*, etc.? I yawn, I Wertherize, I Byronize, I wish myself at the bottom of the Red Sea—good old Red Sea! But it was only half bad when we wished ourselves at the bottom of it together.

Nothing from Edmond or from anybody. The Sun of Friendship goeth down, like that of Intelligence (a fine phrase, don't you think, quite the thing for the *agrégation*). I feel more lonely every day, and in this glorious country, where imbecility is in full bloom, it seems to me that I bear buds and flowers equally with the rest. Yet I have read the last volume of Hegel's Logic. Alas, another lost illusion! It is great, but it is not true Metaphysics; the method is artificial, and that much-lauded Construction of the Absolute is useless. Still, here is material for my thesis. But you, what are you doing? What are you studying? What say your *sous-préfet*, your *proviseur*, your pupils, your dog, your cat, your bed-maker, and yourself?

Send me your confidences, old fellow, and let us gossip. There is nothing better in this world.

To Mademoiselle Virginie Taine.

February 26, 1852.

. . . I see that you prefer painting to everything else. I value your artistic tastes and advise you to remain faithful to your abilities and education; I should be sorry if you were ever to forget your love for beautiful things and for serious and exalted occupations. I hope that, in whatever situation Fate may have in store for you, you will

preserve your sense of Colour, Light, Form, Poetry, and all that can raise the mind above the insipid vulgarities of ordinary life. But, my dear girl, I can only repeat what I have said so often. Do you know whether or not you are an artist? You will have a charming accomplishment, a noble and agreeable occupation in your home. Is it not better than to grovel in the crowd of professional painters of both sexes? Remember that there are in France ten or twelve thousand of these. Can you hope to take a conspicuous place amongst them? You have delicate health; you are a woman, a lady, and you cannot go in for the sort of study which is necessary to earn a name in Art. You cannot live the tempestuous, mobile and licentious life without which Imagination languishes and Genius grows faint.

Consider all this, dear, do. I know that my words wound you and interrupt a lovely dream. But it is from sheer friendship and affection. You do not know the world; you cannot compare the struggling, troubled and miserable life of those who try to emerge from the ordinary level to the peaceful and happy life of those who remain within the beaten track and adorn its monotony with refined occupations. Sometimes I repent that I took the first course. There are moments of spleen, diffidence and prostration, when I feel that I would prefer to be a quiet Professor in some retired corner to having to struggle to find, to publish, and to establish new ideas. I can easily understand the state of your mind; you are in an enthusiastic mood caused by the consciousness of your progress, and the well-deserved praises accorded to your work. Escape from this mood and consider in cold blood the necessities of

a woman's life. Act like a man, and forget this momentary passion; the consciousness of your reasonableness and courage will be a sufficient consolation.

I am an everlasting preacher, you see, and I profess Philosophy in my letters as well as in my chair. But you have acquired the habit of hearing me!!

Nothing new at Nevers. The Rector is still keeping me waiting for an answer; I suppose I shall have to put the question to him myself. I play the piano, and now and then I talk with a young painter who lends me books on painting, drawing, etc. I go out into the fields and think of you as I look at the sky; I am sure there are a great many subjects for landscapes just now. The dull colour of the meadows, the desolate aspect of the whole country-side, the grey and varied tints of the clouds would look well in a picture. There is feeling, soul and colour in it all. Is it not enough?

The more I see Nature and the fields, the better I love them; they seem to have more intelligence, more soul than man.

To Édouard de Suckau.

March 10, 1852.

DEAR DON,[1]—I was awaiting that second letter, in which you had promised to give me so many details and confidences. It has not come, and I am writing to ask for it. . . .

Think of me, old fellow, and write to me often; do write, I really need it. I am in an incredible state of mind. Remember my disgust and sadness during the black days of my first year at the École Normale; multiply them ten-

[1] In English in the original.

fold, and you will not yet have an idea of what I feel. Do you remember those moments when I found no consolation but in the Thought of the τεθνάναι. Now I am lower still, and habitually so. Until now I have bravely fought *ennui* by working. You know what I have done in psychology. I have read the whole of Hegel's Logic, and now only have to write. But this last resource is failing me. I am not well, and in such depressed spirits that I find it impossible to string two ideas together. My last refuge against myself has perished.

I cannot think about myself or anything else without disgust. Now and then I have a flicker of philosophy, by an effort of will, and then fall back on myself—what a pillow!! The conversation of those who surround me bores me to death; I can speak neither of exalted ideas or intimate things. I prefer my free and solitary *ennui* to the constrained boredom of society. I feel like an old machine, all out of order, still going from mere habit, and in whom blurred sensations leave but a universal sickening. There are days when I am so sick of myself that I should like to throw myself away. If I were in Paris I would go to the dissecting theatre or attend surgical operations in order to revive my slumbering faculties; but I am choking in this provincial atmosphere; the universal platitude of men, of events and of things, the soporific preparation of the Literature *agrégation*, the forced solitude in which I confine myself, the insipidity of an elementary class, and the deprivation of my friends and companions of study throw me into a painful numbness, and into a sort of nightmare in which I have the agitation and inward suffering of an active life, without the comfort en-

joyed by the human lizards who are basking in the sun by my side.

I am well punished for those proud dreams which made me seek happiness in studious solitude! A proud solitary cannot live alone. We do not know how to enjoy the good things we breathe every day. Transported from a thinking and loving atmosphere into this heavy element of indifference and stupidity, I now feel how much the former was necessary to me. I did not know it because it had never failed me. And will this last all our lives? Paris is closed to me for ever. The ambitious delusions of adolescence have fled, and I feel that I am condemned for ever to a mean position and to flat surroundings.

How are you? Are you too feeling something like the moral asphyxia which I am describing to you? I have struggled so far, but now I am overwhelmed, and I live but for the hope of a fortnight's holiday at Easter. My assistantship is only for six months; but if the Minister makes me stay on here, I shall take my flight and run to my mother's arms. I am mad, really; I have a passionate wish to embrace some one I love. It would be an ineffable joy to shake you by the hand, and a letter from one of you is an evening's happiness. Can you conceive it? What have I come to? Dear old fellow, leaving you made me realize how much I wanted you. I am inwardly consumed by unregulated and objectless action, or else I am weighed down by dolorous inertia. I can find no remedy outside, for society increases my depression, and pleasure my disgust. My aching brain prevents me from finding a relief in work.

Come, dear Sister of Mercy, send me a soothing and

strengthening potion; no reproaches; I am reproaching myself constantly, and each reproach is like a spur urging me to a convulsive bound before a heavier fall. Write whatever you like. The mere sight of your handwriting will do me good.

Do you think I shall become resigned and used to the provinces after four or five years of this?

To Mademoiselle Virginie Taine.

March 18, 1852.

I feel bitterly what it is to be forlorn, and I do not foresee when I shall be reconciled to provincial and solitary life. I am rather tired just now and not feeling well. The change of season is the cause of it. So I remain idle by my fireside, or else walk out in the fields, warming myself in the first sunbeams of the spring.

I am writing to Uncle Adolphe to ask his advice and his opinion as to the fate of the University. M. Dubois, the former Director of the École Normale, and M. Cousin, have just been turned out of the Superior Council of Public Instruction, and the Public Competition for the Professors' Chairs in the Faculties is suppressed. My profession is now the worst of all, but it is too late to think of taking another; I cannot be anything but a *savant*. I should die if I had to shut myself up in a law-shop or anywhere else. The habit of thinking cannot be lost. I shall certainly be poor and perhaps in an inferior social situation; but I shall read, speak and write, and the most distinguished men of our time have had no other beginnings.

I am sorry that you will not go to dances or parties; why not? Do you think it is not necessary for a woman

to know something of the world, of conversation, and the manners of Society? Besides, it is an opportunity of knowing the point of view of those amongst whom you must live; and what is more, it is an opportunity of taking some recreation and of bringing some diversity in the monotony of daily life. Follow my example. I must go on Monday to the Préfecture to hear a vocal and instrumental amateur concert, for the benefit of the poor. I don't think much of the music, but I shall look at the faces and figures; I shall learn something, and perhaps laugh. No answer from our Universitarian pacha; I have not been informed as to whether or not I must stay here. My journey to Vouziers is still uncertain. I am not sure, whatever you may say, that you paint much better than when I left you. Try some personal composition, especially, if you can, some view of the fields. Nothing in the world is more beautiful.

To M. Ernest Havet.

March 24, 1852.

How very kind of you, Sir, to remember a student whom you saw during three months at the École Normale! Here, I am as one dead, deprived of conversation and of any exchange of thoughts; it seems to me ten years since I left Paris. Your book[1] brought me back for one day to life and to the world. Those are indeed the questions that we used to agitate in that beloved Home of Intellect during those three years when we were allowed to think and to discuss. Such books are necessary; to write them

[1] On Pascal's *Pensées.*

is to do political work and useful propaganda; it is, as Michelet says, pointing again to the pale countenance of Jesus crucified. The past world is being marked and disfigured, and they only who have lived among the dusty tomes of the Fathers know it in all its horror. The Jansenists are the real writers of Christianity, as Murillo and Zurbaran are its real painters; they are the true disciples of St. Augustine and St. Paul; and Pascal, a sincere man, speaks, like them, of the mass of perdition, and of fatal Predestination—that infection of human nature. We shudder when reading Dante, and Dante is gentle and moderate in comparison with St. Augustine's dreadful treatises on Grace and with that invincible dialectic which precipitates the world into Hell. I do not know whether you intended it, but your book is an admirable polemical tract, and, now that I am away from the École and languishing far from Liberty and Science, I see at close quarters the evil which is attacking us, and ardently desire the publication of more such writings.

I am trying to console myself for the present by reading German writers. They are to us what England was to France in the time of Voltaire. I find in them a whole century's stock of ideas, and, were it not for my anxieties respecting the *agrégation* of Letters, which I am going to attempt next year, I should find sufficient rest and occupation in the company of those great thinkers. Ideas have at least that advantage, that they make us brothers and let us all participate in the joy which a great book causes. You have just proved it to me once again, Sir. I thank you again, and beg you to believe that I am now leaving you but to resume my interrupted reading.

Kindly receive, Sir, the expression of my respect and devotion.

To Pérvost-Paradol.

March 28, 1852.

Illustrious Sir, receive my sincere congratulations. An author! [1] a paid author! An author in Paris, a future laureate of the *Académie des Sciences Morales*, and of the *Académie Française!* Your triple crown enchants me, and I have but to beseech you to bestow from time to time your glorious glances towards your unfortunate friend, who, whilst you are triumphing on high, tramps now and for ever in the mire below.

Seriously, I envy you from the bottom of my soul! But tell me what I am to do? I imagine the Literature *agrégation* will still go on this year under the former conditions? [2] Do you know anything about it? And should I continue to prepare for it? What an uncertain and miserable life! and if there were a Providence, why did it not make me come into the world with an income of 2,000 fr.? How I would have renounced the grandeur

[1] Gréard, p. 193. Prévost-Paradol had just signed an agreement with Hachette, the publisher, concerning a book entitled *Revue de l'Histoire Universelle*, which appeared in 1854.

[2] Gréard, p. 192: "I tell you in confidence that the scheme of study proposed by the Minister to the Council of the University, which may be considered as final, has fixed the age of twenty-five for the *agrégation*, which, under the name of *agrégation* of Letters, comprises History, Rhetoric, and Grammar, the three being turned into one." It will be seen further that the *agrégation des lettres* was suppressed for the year 1852.

of Professorship and let the scribblers scream who are now larding us with pin-pricks! What a stupid calling is that of a martyr! I do not even know whether I shall be here until the end of the year. I have asked M. Vacherot to get me an answer at once. If you see him, ask him whether M. Lesieur has said nothing. My Easter trip depends on the answer. If it is affirmative, how pleased I shall be to go and see you on my way. I am hungering for friendship and getting stifled here; I am a prey to spleen half the week. I write disconsolate letters to Suckau. I long to be at the bottom of the Red Sea. We are all the same. A circular from Edmond (About) which has reached me was like one of Jeremiah's Lamentations. If there were two of us, in any country, I should feel as if the Heavens were opening.

How did you get to know the Bashaw of booksellers? He is a regular client for you. I see there is another article by you (in the *Revue de l'Instruction Publique*) on Flourens' speech. But, Man useful to Morals, how can you be useful to the morals which are extolled nowadays, and yet write a book? You will speak of progress? But Progress is a pure pantheistic abomination; ask our blessed masters—Of the natural and personal force by which mankind itself shapes its own destiny? But that is denying Providence and Bossuet's God, the great Chess-player whose pawns we are.—Of the necessary and regular laws which rule the world? But that is denying Liberty, M. Cousin's dear Liberty, and consequently Hell, etc., etc.

You will have to take an oblique road. But can you remain eloquent under half a mask? Well, I have every confidence in your cleverness, and I wish the Academy

may be immoral enough to crown[1] your morality. Tell me, especially, what you mean to do about the six last centuries, for they contain but a great war against the Church and Dogma, such an obvious war that M. Donoso Cortes concludes that the world is going to perdition, and that Christ will soon visit it again in order to save it.

If you like, I will bring you Hegel's *Philosophy of History* for the summer holidays, and you will see there some pyramids of ideas fit to break the legs of any Frenchman who would try to scale them. Indeed, I look and look, and I see no possible science but in the shape of a war. Lucien Sorel[2] has said so, and I love him too much not to endorse his ideas, and not to fear that they may bring down the thunder. You must get a lightning-conductor, old man, for, of all powder magazines, History is that which explodes most easily.

Crouslé, who has just written to me, does not seem to know of your design, and tells me that the École is completely upset.[3] He has sprained his ankle and has the spleen.

The best representative of this country, my dear chap, is the Abbé Gaume, the author of the gnawing worm of which your review speaks. I feel it, and I am beginning to gather the flowers of my position. A sixteen-year old

[1] Prévost-Paradol intended to present his book to the Academy of Moral and Political Science.

[2] Prévost-Paradol's pseudonym in the *Liberté de Penser*.

[3] Prévost-Paradol announced his decision of leaving the École. Extract from M. Crouslé's letter (March 27): "It is becoming almost impossible to work, everybody is disgusted. . . . The Library is being bowdlerized further . . . volumes of Voltaire and Rousseau have disappeared."

scamp of a noble family, who was head of the class last year, having now dropped to being tenth, amused himself by saying that I pronounced a eulogy of Danton in class, and vindicated his wounded vanity by calumnies. Evil tongues immediately embellished the tale, and I had to justify myself to the Rector. It is true that my fifteen other pupils are fond of me; they have asked the Rector to keep me till the end of the year, and were anxious to lick the tale-bearer. But the little wretch is a flaw in my armour, and whatever I may do, I shall soon be wounded by all the darts he will aim at me.

Answer me before the Easter holidays, and ask M. Vacherot to answer me; if I stay on here and go to the Ardennes, I shall let you know on which day I can see you in Paris. And Planat? is he lost? for charity's sake tell me of him! We were a Trinity at Bourbon: shall one of the three persons perish? The artist especially!!

The Minister of Public Education to H. Taine.

March 30, 1852.

SIR,—The Rector of the Departmental Academy of the Nièvre, in announcing to you my decision of March 23, which put an end to the assistantship with which you were momentarily entrusted at the Nevers College, has probably informed you that I proposed to give you another destination. By a decree dated March 19, I have just entrusted to you the assistantship of the Rhetoric chair at the *lycée* at Poitiers. It was after carefully acquainting myself with the notes which concern you that I resolved to give

you a trial in a branch of teaching less perilous for your future. I noticed, in fact, that your philosophical lessons at Nevers recalled the doctrines for which you were justly reprimanded at the beginning. I am therefore not without some anxiety as to the new test to which you are about to be subjected. If the Rector of the Academy of the Vienne, whom I have desired to keep a careful watch over your lessons, is kind enough to assist you with his advice I urge you to accept it with deference; under the enlightened direction of this functionary, you will succeed, I hope, in untrammelling your teaching from doctrines which, at a mature age, you will appreciate more justly, and which do not belong to the domain of classical studies.

I will not keep from you, Sir, the fact that, if this test should not answer my expectations, I should find myself under the necessity of depriving myself of your services.

You are invited to place yourself at the Rector's disposal on April 15. This functionary will deliver to you a certified copy of my order.

Receive, Sir, the assurance of my distinguished consideration.

The Minister of Public Education and Public Worship.

H. FORTOUL.

Extract from a short note written by H. Taine to his mother :—

April 3, 1852.

I am appointed as an assistant in Rhetoric at Poitiers. It is better in every respect; but the Minister's letter is severe and threatening, and I know that I have been directly maligned to him.

You cannot believe how indifferent I am to my profession and its chances. Whatever happens I can always earn my living by giving private lessons in Paris. Perhaps being discharged is the best thing which could happen to me. . . .

CHAPTER II

Poitiers—Correspondence

To his Mother.

POITIERS, 6 RUE DES CARMÉLITES,

April 13, 1852.

I receive 2,000 fr. here, plus 200 or 300 fr. for *baccalauréat* lectures. I am settled since last night in a very fine room, perhaps a little too far from the college. You see I have not lost by the change.

I have found here one of my Bourbon school friends, M. Émile Saigey, who is a telegraph engineer. He is pleasant and witty, and I shall not be so bored as at Nevers.

The *agrégation* competitions, announced for August 20, will not take place. The Minister's decree states that the time for them will be fixed later on, which vexes me, for they will then take place according to the new regulations, which demand twenty-five years of age, five years' service, etc., all which I have not. I will consult the Rector, and in any case work vigorously at my theses, claim the approbation of Paris examiners, and try to become a Doctor; it would be as good a recommendation as being an *agrégé*.

I am paying my official calls to-day; I have already seen the *Proviseur* and the Chaplain. I do not think I

shall have to do with geniuses, but I hope they are not a bad sort.

My predecessor is leaving his class for a Faculty assistantship. The professor whose place he is going to fill is trying for an appointment at Bordeaux or Paris. In this case my predecessor may obtain the vacancy just made, and I may perhaps get his place. But hang uncertainties and come what may!

I write with your portrait before me. How kind of Virginie to give it to me! Suckau, whom I saw in Paris for a moment, tells me that the great painters did not exhibit on account of the jury, and that the Exhibition was poor, which lessens my regrets.

To Édouard de Suckau.

April 20, 1852.

DEAR ED.,—I read your first page with terror. What fearsome prose you can write when you set about it! I wondered for a moment what was *this last and fatal decree* before I remembered that it applied to the suppressed *agrégation*. Indeed do not believe that my old friendship for you is necessary to obtain my pardon for your silence! Even had not your letter come to scatter flowers over my grave, you would still be my own dear Ed., and all I ask of you is to be as consoled as I am. Why am I consoled? The reason is simple, my friend. My disillusions during the last eight months have been so great, and go on increasing so fast, that I begin to understand not only Spinoza's theory but his practice. I consider that my Universitarian future is lost; as it is the only one I had to look forward to, and

as I see no door by which I can escape from the lions' den, I am becoming used to looking upon my profession as a mere means of earning my living. Instead of trying to satisfy my ambition, I am trying to rid myself of ambition. For several months past I have only felt ambitious once a fortnight. I hope this will go on improving and I may be quite peaceful in the end. I am living quite happily in Poitiers, busy writing my thesis on Sensations. If I had no fear of the examination I should be perfectly calm. To think, to co-ordinate one's thoughts and to write them down is a delicious thing.; the less one thinks of the public the better one is pleased. It is the *tête-à-tête* of love ; and if I could constrain myself to forsake the world, and to live alone with this dear and charming mistress, I think I should have nothing to wish for. I am trying to calm all my wrath and all my desires. I have read no newspapers for six months; I never speak of politics or religion. It used to chagrin me six months ago, now it pleases me. I even, in the course of my studies, avoid thinking of the differences between our Science and that of the reigning party ; I try to abstract myself completely from present things, to live altogether in the world of general ideas, to be no longer an actor but a spectator. Our Masters have lived thus since the beginnings of Philosophy. Why should I wish for a better fate ?

Not that I am already *αὐτάρχης καὶ ἀπάθης*. The passionate and combative animal that you know bounds in irritation now and then, but I hope to send it to sleep, even if I have to wake it up, if the day of the great judgment should come.

I told you I had written my theses. I asked M. Simon

for an approbation; receiving no answer, I asked Prévost to see him. No news. I shall wait till Thursday, and then write directly to M. Le Clerc.[1] I shall have one hundred and fifty pages of French and about fifty of Latin. It seems that three weeks are wanted to print that. I should much like to be a Doctor by the end of the year. Will they accept my thesis? I say that the feeling *ego* is extended and situate in the nerves, and I prove Aristotle's ἐντελέχεια. I may be saved by that great name and a show of psychological method.

Do you not fear to make them bristle with horror by showing some common sense on the question of Liberty?[2] Beware, Fatalist! they will say to you, and to me: Beware, Materialist! That is the worst of it: we cannot move without treading on their toes.

Do not talk to me of my class, old fellow. It is the acme of idleness, stupidity and platitude, far worse than Nevers. (I have had posthumous adventures at Nevers since I left, but it is all so stupid that I have not the courage to write about it). I shower impositions upon them. All those souls are still-born, and living amongst them makes one as rotten as they are.

"Fools ever since Adam have been in the majority."

I have had the luck to find an old schoolfellow here, an engineer; he is witty and distinguished, and of an inquiring mind, and we have long talks. It is an unexpected boon—the only one, alas.

As to Poitiers, you will have an idea of the sort of society it is, when I tell you that I may not allow my pupils to read

[1] Dean of the Faculty of Letters.

[2] M. de Suckau had begun writing a thesis on *Liberty*.

the *Provinciales* (Pascal), the *École des Maris* (Molière), and Lamartine's works at their Library.

I should think the oath might conscientiously be taken; it means, I think, that we will obey the laws and that we will not conspire against the President. I do not take it to mean any more, and I shall keep it in that sense. If he will only let me live and think by myself in my room, I shall give him for his money classes as insignificant as he can wish for.

To Prévost-Paradol.

April 25, 1852.

My dear Friend,—Here am I, a Poitevin; it is not much to be proud of. The town is hideous, paved with nails' heads, or rather points, religious to the uttermost, peopled with nobles, ultra-legitimists who hold themselves aloof; the college is large and handsome, but the students are far more stupid than at Nevers, more lazy especially; they write me impossible orations, with which I am perfectly sickened. Imagine the extreme of bad taste, cold declamation, *noble* style, prosopopœia and hypotyposis, and, especially, an unapproachable lack of ideas. For warmth and passion they are about forty degrees below zero (Réaumur), and so extraordinarily obtuse that they never know when they are being laughed at. Paris and the provinces are two worlds; it must be seen to be imagined. Warned by the Rector and by the amiable letter you read,[1] I consulted the authorities before consenting to give a boy permission to read the *Provinciales*. It was refused! You see what they have come to.

[1] M. Fortoul's letter, p. 190.

No *agrégation* for me this year. Ergo, I am writing my theses. I have written out the plan of the French one (on Sensation), and I have consulted M. Simon, asking for his approbation; it cometh not, and I want to begin! Can you see him as you promised? I have given him the principal idea, it is psychology and pure observation, and I found myself on Aristotle's authority. Perhaps M. Simon is no longer an examiner, since Cousin has resumed his lectures. Then I should have to write directly to M. Joseph Victor Le Clerc, Dean, etc.

I wish for a speedy answer, as I want to go up at the beginning of August, if possible. A Doctor's degree counts for two years' services, and I should then be *agrégabilis*—as I wish to see myself, old fellow. In the course of your meditations *re* Chinese and Mandchus, you might wander past No. 10, Place de la Madeleine,[1] and write to me about the Celestial Empire and the blessed *Faculté's* wishes at the same time. What a bog we are in, to be sure!! I hear that only college matters will be demanded at the *agrégation* examinations; it will be the death of Higher Studies. The Faculty Professors (I have just met some), obliged to give their lectures before law-students, will give them broad epitomes of History and Literature, original researches will come to an end; it is a universal let down.

I hear that you will see a fine ceremony on May 10. Some one here, who heard the Republican Guards shouting "Vive," etc., tells me they have the finest bass voices in the world; with the help of liquor, it will be a sublime concert: shall we see 1804 over again? Lucky are the

[1] M. J. Simon's house.

wardrobe people who have preserved old costumes! France is suffering from bric-à-brac mania, and the present Marseillaise is "Old Clo'!"

Well, *quid novi*? I have not read any newspapers since December 2. The *Officiel* bores me, and, not being in Paris, I take no interest in concerts, theatres, etc. You, who are a society man, a politician, might send me some sort of news. Here, one is obliged to keep quiet, and, however desirous one may be of not saying anything, one always says too much.

I shall send you my French prose when it is ready. It will be pure science, very little style about it. You can send me a mass of notes and corrections. Really, I think I have discovered several things, and a homogeneous theory, especially some palpable facts on the nature of the Soul. Will it be too bold? You will tell me what you think.

I have found Saigey here, whom you used to know at Bourbon. He is sorry that he took up a mathematical machine's profession, and would like to taste Moral Science. He is polished and witty, and I am glad to have him.

Answer me soon *voci in deserto clamanti*.

To M. Léon Crouslé.

April 25, 1852.

My dear Crouslé,—Prévost has no doubt seen you and told you of my adventures. Here I am, at Poitiers, a Rhetoric assistant-master, with a threatening letter and imminent discharge if I do not remain perfectly insipid. But let us put all these paltry things aside; I am so tired of it all that I do not even care to speak about it.

We have both dropped into the same hole. No *agréga-*

tion for me, at least, this year, and for us both, in eighteen months' time, a ridiculous examination when every mediocrity will be admitted. What are you others doing at the École? Will you stay there? Are you going in for another career? What a disillusion, old fellow! It is only in the provinces that we can see such susceptibilities in parents and such stupidity in pupils. I correct French disquisitions, which make me sick; acting on the Censor's advice, I refuse to pupils who ask for it permission to read the *Provinciales*. I hear my colleagues say that Philosophy has been the perdition of the University. Nothing is expected of a professor save a complete absence of ideas or passion, a mechanical soul, the old-fashioned pedantry of the old buffers who used to teach us "Barbaro" and "Amo Deum." All that you acquire at the École, knowledge, a distinguished mind, a free judgment on any subject, is harmful to you. At last I understand M. de Talleyrand's saying "Have no zeal." The true Professor is a speaking fossil who knows not a word about his own times, a sort of La Harpe or Lefeau. Your title of Normalien will be fatal to you; to come out of that infamous den means that you carry infection with you. You cannot imagine what efforts of self-control and perseverance are necessary to arrest on your lips the new idea or bright expression just bursting forth. And especially, when you have spent three years amongst learned men and great writers, you cannot imagine how depressing it is to correct the vapid and emphatic essays of provincial students, to feel absolutely misunderstood, to be obliged to repeat what you do not consider worth listening to, to debase one's ideas and teaching, to live amongst men devoid of ideas and

passion, whom ideas and passion offend ! ! ! Our history is that of Julien at the seminary.[1]

I attempt to console myself by writing my theses (the French one on Sensation and the Latin one on Exterior Perception). I have given up the Germans; nowadays I dare not read them openly. It would be risking an explosion to dig up and bring to light the Trans-Rhenish mines. I have written to M. Simon, supposing that M. Le Clerc still lets him examine the theses, and that his approbation is necessary to start with. I passed so rapidly through Paris that I could not see him, or M. Vacherot, or you, or anybody, except Prévost, just for a moment.

Are you cured? I hope you are. But is your soul still suffering? How well I can understand such disgust, such a desire for pleasures and emotions which we can never have, which are but for the noble and the rich ! . . . Seen at a distance, they may seem happy; but seen close, their life is so empty and so ridiculous that I cease to envy it.

On the whole, to work is still the better part. Work becomes interesting, *ennui* disappears, time is annihilated, and the great restful end comes insensibly nearer. All hopes are lost as life progresses; what blissful dreams are those of boyhood ! Glory, Love, Fortune ! ! Now I ask but to be left alone; I am shackled by my profession, and our chains are tightened now and then by the great hand of our god the Minister in order that we may feel them. If it were not for that I should hardly have any worries. It seems to me that Spinoza and Descartes were happy in their Dutch villages, and if I had enough money I should go and live on a fifth floor in Paris. Science is worthy to

[1] Stendhal, *Rouge et Noir.*

be loved for its own sake, and not to be made into a means of success. I no longer count on any happiness to come; I am beginning to gather my desires into one—only one, which is to clear up my ideas and to solve my problems. I am trying to do so, at least, in spite of my bouts of anger, of wounded self-love and deluded ambition; yet I hope that my sky will end by becoming serene after all these storms. I try to calm myself by every means in my power; I see very few people, I read no politics; if it were possible I should like to forget the things of to-day, and live with my friends, Ideas and Art.

This is rather hermit-like, and, like you, I have fits of rage. But what is to be done? Our youth revolts against our condition. We must choose, abjure the one or the other, make of our profession a means of bread-winning, and philosophize in silence, or throw our gown into the fire and launch out into the uncertain future. Which is best? Prévost is perhaps in the right.[1] But each must go where his temperament leads him. Where is yours directing you? Dear old friend, let us converse as we used to do in the old fraternal, École Normale style. You said, in one of our walks round the Quadrangle that I had been the first to talk seriously and intimately to you. Let us do as we did then. Plato was indeed right when he said that there were but two good things in the world, Philosophy and Friendship.

What are Marot and Ponsot doing, and all the third-year men?

[1] Prévost-Paradol had left the École Normale before the end of his third year, on a long leave of absence.

PROFESSORSHIP

To Mademoiselle Virginie Taine.

April 28, 1852.

Positively, my dear girl, Mother is wrong in believing that I am exaggerating the beauty of my position (*not* of my person ! !). My room is quiet and pretty, with a beautiful glimpse of the sky above the garden. At the present moment I am writing from the depths of my arm-chair, between my bookshelves and my piano, like a real sultan. True, I may not become an *agrégé*, yet, who knows, the chance is a small one, but perhaps . . . I am writing my two theses ; a Doctor's degree is worth two years' services. If I obtained it in August, it would make five years, at twenty-four and a half years of age ; I might perhaps obtain leave to dispense with the full age, though that is very doubtful. I have seen the Rector here and explained to him the nasty little Nevers stories ; the letter he has had from M. Lesieur is a replica of mine. They are putting me on trial—I shall try to stand the test. To begin with, and acting on the advice of the authorities, I have refused to allow pupils to read at their Library the *Provinciales*, *Tartufe*, *l'École des Femmes*, and *Jocelyn*. You may die with laughter, but so it is. This town is ultra-virtuous, and the pious parents, who read Paul de Kock, would haul us over the coals if we were thus to corrupt their children. Our honest city is yet a little more stupid than Nevers ; it swarms with convents and nobility, and it is of all the lands under the sun that where there is least thought. I am horrified when I read the papers of my pupils. Yesterday, in a French oration three pages long, I found six prosopopœia, one to Italy, one to Constantinople, one

to the time of Pericles, one to the Genie of Fine Arts, etc. I ask: "Why this lyrical frenzy?" and I am answered: "We did not know what to write, Sir." Here are some French verses on the insects of the Hypanis (one insect is speaking, perched on a flower).

> Je veux vous faire part de mon expérience,
> Apporter *moi aussi* le fruit d'un peu de science
> Qui vous est *due* de droit. Parmi tous les malheurs
> Qui *diminuent* de Dieu les immenses faveurs,
> Comptons surtout, messieurs, cet esprit d'injustice
> Envers le Créateur. Portés *ainsi au* vice,
> Nous oublions déjà le sort qui nous attend
> Et . . . .

What do you think of this for masculine wit? I do not believe a girl would dare write such bosh. I am indeed in the lions' den, and I bristle with horror every moment, as I listen to those Poitevin amenities. At Nevers, at least, my pupils did not write absurdities; here I might be in the stables of Augeas.

I am glad I spent a day at Rethel; their ways are old-fashioned, but I like them because they are finished and natural; also they are very kind people, and there is something within me decidedly Rethelois: the family sentiment.

I suppose you will soon be going to Beaurepaire;[1] the leaves are opening, and the country is becoming beautifully green. The landscape is more lovely than at any other time of the year. Towards Longwé, by the mill, there is a little path which leads up into the woods and often meets the brook, with large open spaces full of thick new grass. The

[1] The country house of the Taine family in the Ardennes.

stream is dark with willows, the water is clear and rapid, nothing could be more solitary, more lovely.

I have found here a Faculty professor, a schoolfellow of our father's, whose son is head boy in my class, M. Anot, of Mézières. His brother, an inspector at Versailles, has just been discharged on account of an article in which he blamed the Education Bill. The Government is rough-handed and throws over whomever ventures on a word. I am not tempted to say anything. The table where I have my meals is frequented by well-bred people who do not talk politics. It is probable that as I get further away from the École Normale, I shall adapt myself better to Society manners and acquire the necessary silent insipidity. My education and life in Paris had raised me above the ordinary level. I find that life in the provinces has not reached further than the eighteenth century; I will climb down and try not to be out of focus. So be it.

My thesis is my great amusement. It is a fatigue and a pleasure to arrange one's ideas and to write them down. It drives away boredom, and time passes. Heigho; if this situation can last I shall be content. Ambition is hardly satisfied, but time is occupied and the mind is not idle. What more could be wished?

Sophie ought to write on this subject: "The Insects of the Hypanis." (They only live for one day; relate the sayings of the oldest of them, at least ten hours of age. It is a parody of human sentiments.)

Those ten days at Vouziers did me good.

To Mademoiselle Sophie Taine.

May 11, 1852.

Poitiers is topsy-turvy just now. Splendid family coaches, at least fifty years old and heavily laden, roll in clouds of dust; noble young men in black trousers, coats and hats, ride on horseback in the full sunshine; the officers of the garrison have put on their most brilliant uniforms and most shining top-boots. Everybody runs, hurrying, perspiring and swallowing the dust, along a road which I can see from this garden, in order to go and look at a dozen lanky horses who will describe a circle round a dry, flat plain, and one of which will arrive before the others. Placards had been stuck as far as the department of the Nièvre; a lady asked me yesterday whether a great number of Parisians would come down. It has been *the* subject of conversation for the last fortnight.

The people in the house I live in are very respectable, and there are some pretty children. I was playing with one of them yesterday, and the mother took advantage of it to treat me to an hour's dissertation on maternal love. "My darling children! can I ever bear to part from them? Ah, I cannot be away from them for a moment! Without an effort I have given up Society for their sake!" I stood, hat in hand, listening to these pathetic sentiments delivered in appropriate tones, and promised myself that never again would I turn on this hot-water tap. People here cannot understand that one does not wish to talk to them or to hear them speak; they are so charmed with their own words that they think every one is likewise delighted.

One of the most perfect chatterboxes is M. N., a good,

well-meaning creature on the whole. He has called on me, and I have heard one of his lectures at the Faculty. Horrors! that is what Rhetoric and the provinces can make of a man! And in twenty years' time I shall be like that! better be hanged first! Imagine an abundance of sweetest liquorice-water flowing with a nauseous gurgle until one feels surfeited and sickened. No order, no method, no emphasis, just a leaking pipe out of which water runs out anyhow. In the place of ideas, such paradoxes as these: "La Fontaine was very witty." "Tasso, in Armida, invented the artificial woman," etc.

The others have the same sort of talent; they attract about a dozen bored or imbecile hearers. There is a stream of vapidity which goes from the lecturer to the audience, and back from the audience to the lecturer. Imagine the effect when it is added to education and to their nature! This great lesson is to be gathered from it all: that it is unnecessary to think in order to make one's way; that lack of ideas is esteemed and sought after, and that perfection consists in being an automaton, because an automaton is more docile than an intelligent being.

No news. I am writing my thesis; the people in Paris, whose official approbation I have asked for, do not answer, which vexes me. You have had a sample of the wit of my pupils. My duty calls are paid, and I see no one. The less I come into contact with those who surround me the less I shall deteriorate.

My friends at the École write me lamentations on the profession, and I join in the chorus; one more of them has just resigned. The others mean to leave at the end of the year.

But I have a piano and a sofa to console me.

You ought to read a little Natural History, and fish out from our books that Flora of the neighbourhood of Paris (Mérat's); it might do for Vouziers. Nothing is more amusing than to converse with the plants one meets with in country walks.

Become a great pianist, my dear; we have but one resource, which is to work hard or else to be bored, and you are too wise to resign yourself to boredom.

AN ANSWER TO THE LETTER WRITTEN BY M. TAINE, PROFESSOR AT THE POITIERS LYCÉE, *May* 6, 1852.[1]

Victor Le Clerc, Dean.

M. Adolphe Garnier to M. Victor Le Clerc.

May 17, 1852.

MONSIEUR LE DOYEN,—You do me the honour of asking for my opinion on the subjects proposed by M. Taine for his theses. You know my liking for dogmatical theses. You know that historical theses, instead of throwing light on doubtful points of philosophical or literary history, are usually confined to the analysis of some author, which does not bring much progress to science. I am therefore very favourably disposed towards M. Taine's subjects. When I tell you that the conclusions M. Taine announces are diametrically opposed to my own, I am not suggesting that you should refuse the subjects of which he wishes to treat. But please advise him to think over them again; he has just left the École, where I know that Reid is not taught; let him take the trouble to study it

[1] M. Taine's letter has not been preserved.

thoroughly; let him alter his theories, or at least the expression in his letter. What are *images* of *sensations* in the brain, of *illusory* sensations representing exterior objects to us? Is the outer world but an illusion? Again, how has Nature the *intention* to make the exterior known to us, and an *ingenious* means of effecting this? How does he come to re-establish Aristotle's theory on the ψυχή which perishes with the body, without considering that if he attributes inclinations to the body, and even, as does Aristotle, particular knowledge, it will not be difficult to ascribe general knowledge to the body? How can he say that such doctrines are not dangerous?

I saw M. Taine at the last *agrégation* competition. He has a very great talent for speaking; his oratorical manner is irreproachable—it is impossible to express oneself with more grace, and more completely to fascinate one's audience; but those are oratorical and not philosophical qualities. He was only fifth in the written examinations, and, after having risen to the first rank in argumentation, he dropped back to the very last by his lecture on the *Being* identical with the *Good*. I am persuaded that he has too much imagination to be a philosopher, and that he would find in literature and poetry a more legitimate and more felicitous use of his brilliant qualities.

Accept, M. le Doyen, my profound respect,

ADOLPHE GARNIER.

H. Taine to his Mother.

May 26, 1852.

Since I arrived here I have been working night and morning, Sundays and week-days, on my two theses.

I finished them to-night, and in a fortnight's time I shall have put them straight and sent them to Paris. I am playing for high stakes, perhaps: I am bringing to light ideas absolutely new, and therefore contrary to those of the examiners; but if I succeed I shall rise out of the crowd, and that is what I want to do.

I have been very happy all this time. It is an infinite pleasure and a fascinating occupation to handle ideas. All one's faculties are strained, everything else is forgotten, days fly like an arrow, and in the end one is pleased with oneself for having accomplished a real effort and a manly action. It is even a sort of intoxication; the more one drinks, the more one wants to drink, and, habit helping passion, it becomes impossible to leave one's room. At this moment I understand those who have lived on their chair, looking into their own brains, not even deigning to put their head out of the window to see what was going on. It seems as if no personal practical business was worth troubling about; I have not felt at all curious to read the newspapers. I do not care a straw for politics: I have my own world, and I wish to stay there, leaving those who wish to do so to quarrel over uniforms, the Government, money, posts, etc. Is not that a happy disposition? It seems to me that whatever happens, I have in the future a refuge within myself against all vicissitudes.

I do not think any one could say a word against my lectures. I read Bossuet and the *Misanthrope* to my pupils, and I am going to correct an address which two of them are going to present to the Bishop on the day of Confirmation in the College. I imagine that I shall end by becoming a Saint, and that I shall one day send you my relics.

The place where I have my meals is frequented by better people than the one at Nevers. Some of the young men there are musical, and we play together. My landlord has a charming little girl of eighteen months, who is just beginning to walk, who looks one in the face with her big eyes and who kisses everybody; his garden is full of roses. I have also seen two rather green and smiling spots in the neighbourhood.

Otherwise I have no news. I could only relate my thesis to you, and, fortunately, that grind is reserved for my examiners.

The extra lectures which had been promised me have ended in smoke, and I shall merely have my 2,000 fr. No letters from any one.

Perhaps the Faculty will keep my thesis a long time to examine it before authorizing me to have it printed. I am told that printing will take three weeks. It is only ten days later that the *vivâ voce* examination will begin. My colleagues tell me I shall be lucky if I pass this year; and, if I pass, I shall probably have to stay in Paris until the end of August. The Faculty examinations cease on the first of September.

M. Barthélemy St. Hilaire, to whom Uncle Adolphe had introduced me, refused the oath, and in consequence is now nobody; M. Simon likewise—he writes for his living. All my friends are destroyed. I must crouch in a hole and live like a philosophical rat. At present I like my hole: music cheers me up, the sky is lovely, and I only ask for one thing, letters.

To M. Léon Crouslé.

June 2, 1852.

Many thanks for your nice kind letters, and apologies for my obstinate silence. I have been sapping for six weeks in the hard soil of the Doctorate, from five in the morning till eleven at night. I have written out the rough copy of the Latin, and copied out the French thesis. My soul is literally drowned in sensations, nerves, conscience, brain, and exterior perceptions, and I am still almost incapable of answering your letter.

I look upon my thesis with pleasure and terror, because it is new. M. Garnier approves of the subject, but blames my conclusions, and ends by saying that I am an orator and a man of letters, but not a philosopher. What will he think when he reads it? Will the holy Sorbonne admit a heretic? That is the question which now runs in my head. My subject is a fine one; I treat of the boundary between moral and physical Science, between the natural and the intellectual world. My thesis gives the relation between the *ego* and the nerves, the soul and the body, Force and Matter, Unity and Multiplicity, and does so experimentally, which is the great problem of natural science; it gives a theory of the *ego*, insomuch as it is the object of consciousness, starting from the thoughts, and consequently from all human phenomena, since volition depends on passion, and passion on thought. It therefore dips into both worlds, and gives a summing up of one and the principle of the other. But, horrors! it is new! I shall write to M. Garnier, when sending him my prose, on the advantages of new

theories, on contradictions, etc., and prove to him syllogistically that I am neither a Sceptic nor a Materialist. Pray God, or rather the great men in the little dark room through whom He is manifested, that they may be benign and kindly disposed.

I am tempting Fortune, like our friend Prévost. It would be too much, whatever Horace may say, to have at the same time

Exiguum censum turpemque repulsam.

And now, my dear fellow, one word about your sermon. I assure you that my mind is perfectly calm, and that I feel neither contempt nor rancour towards the good people who have beaten me. As you say, I am all in God, and I engulph myself in the hope of eternal life. During the last two months I have not given a moment's thoughts to my future, to my ruined hopes, or to political things; I systematically abstain from reading newspapers and I avoid irritating conversations. I confine myself to the Abstract and the Purely General. I try to live outside time and space, and I see that one can do so quite comfortably. Unremitting labour and building up of ideas vouchsafe deep contentment and absolute peace. When my head is too tired I have my piano and the country, and I find there an infinite quietude, unimaginable in your feverish Paris and our argumentative École. I completely understand the life of Descartes and of Spinoza, and I do not see why we should not live like them. Descartes, it is true, had that supreme blessing of possessing enough to live on, but the other was obliged to polish optical glasses. Well, we are obliged to teach Rhetoric or Grammar. Is it worse?

Not at all; on the average, my services to the State take me about two hours a day. It is a fine thing to be a free man at the cost of such a short slavery. We are going to the Promised Land, and the tribute we have to pay at the door is not exorbitant. The University is excellent for that; if we merely suppress our ambition, desire for pleasure, and love of the world, and if we know how to live alone with our thoughts, we may be quite happy. Now, I am hoping to be able to work in myself those reforms I am speaking of. When we leave the École, we are expansive, politically-minded, and militant; we need Art and Society; in a few years time, I daresay, we can end by being satisfied with our own conversation and that of the trees and clouds. The University has that advantage that it forbids us any other life than the scientific life. We are forced to become either philosophers or brute beasts. My choice is made.

Likewise for the pupils. One ends by treating them as they deserve to be treated. I punish mine with great success, and I read their platitudes with stoical calmness. When one has made up one's mind to it, the sight of hypocrites and fools is no longer irritating.

This is the hardest reform, my dear fellow; at the École we take too much of a spirit of equality. We assume that absurd hypothesis that all men are men. Not at all: sometimes we may happen to meet one by chance; the others are machines, as you rightly say, who make our bread and clothes, and whom, I may add, are greeted with respect. We must become accustomed to live in the great machine and all its stupid wheels. If we wear a cuirass of pride, we no longer feel the shocks; we forget individuals,

and we only think of the general things which alone are worth dwelling on.

Write and tell me why you have remained in the shop. My only reason is that it pays 1,800 fr. for two hours' work a day.

Who has taken M. Simon's place with the first year students? Who has resigned? Is it Benazé? Love to all the others. To thee a fraternal greeting.

To Prévost-Paradol.

June 2, 1852.

DEAR OLD FELLOW,—I congratulate you on being a great man.[1] First, it looks well, and secondly it is profitable; and you would have found your eloquence Brevet worth something if your contract with Hachette had taken place one month later. But no matter, you are launched now; everything is in your favour, reviews, newspapers, acquaintances, everything. Persevere on your course, and let me, from my black hole, hear the plaudits due to you.

I too am fidgeting in my narrow domain: not that I aspire to the suffrages of the Literary Academy.

Non tanta decet fiducia victum.

(By the bye, though, you might send me the question propounded by the Académie des Sciences Morales on Sleep.)

But I am about to present myself to our licensed Inquisitors of the Sorbonne, and in a week's time I shall send

[1] Prévost-Paradol had been awarded a prize for eloquence by the Académie Française for his eulogy of Bernardin de Saint Pierre.

150 pages of French prose and a big Latin composition to M. Garnier. My *Sensations* are copied out, but my Ciceronian sentences are still in the rough. Why have I been so quick? Because our lords and masters will take at least a month to give the authorization to send to press, and the printing will take three weeks. It would be impossible to tell you with what energy I had to sap to uproot that psychological thistle from my brains all within six weeks' time.

Even now, the sensations, perceptions, imaginations, conceptions, representations, illusions, and the whole company of *ions* are still dancing in my head, and I am giddy and dazed, like a staghound after chasing one deer for thirty-six hours. But it is a good system, and I do not think there is a better way of writing any thing than by doing so straight off and in one breath, so to speak, after lengthily meditating over it.

M. Garnier said that he approved of the subjects but not of my conclusions (I knew that since I dispute Reid's assertions). What will he say? Will he receive me? *That is the question.* There is a theory of the relations between the ego and the nervous system which is not materialistic, but which will scandalize the spiritualists. It is Aristotle's ἐντελέχεια experimentally proved. But the worst is that the rest is new. You are already too much of the Académie Française for me to send you those scientific thorns; but, to tell the truth, I am terribly afraid they will prick those gentlemen's fingers.

As to the news for which you ask, my dear fellow, there is none. I saw Treille for two hours. I keep my pupils in, and I obtain perfect silence. Keeping a pupil in is a

very ingenious system, which consists in placing a boy for an hour in a room, where he writes, under the dictation of the Preparation Master, instead of going out to play.

By the bye, I am Professor of Rhetoric. Do not throw the title of Philosopher at my head as you do on your envelopes; it would hang me.

These are now my habits. I am correcting a French address, which one of my pupils is going to spout to His Grandeur Monsignor the Bishop,[1] who is coming to the College for Confirmation. I have bought a Universitarian badge. By order of the Rector, I myself pronounce the Latin prayer at the opening of the class (to be sure I have shortened it by one half, as it was too long). I read to my pupils Bossuet's *Treatise on Concupiscence*; I do not let them read *l'École des Femmes;* I have systematically ceased to read newspapers; I do not speak about politics, and I stay at home. Add that I have been to two May services to Mary (a prima donna, who was passing through the town, was the singer). Clearly, after all this, you may commend yourself to my prayers, and hope to acquire my relics some day; if you become one of the forty immortals, I shall one day join the holy phalanx of the blest. Amen, my brother.

Farewell. Send me news of your prize, quick.

To M. Adolphe Garnier.

June 7, 1852.

SIR,—The Dean of Faculty, in sending me your letter, gives me some hope that my theses will be handed to you for examination. Allow me to defend them against some

[1] Mgr. Pie.

of your reproaches. A sick man cannot plead his cause better than to his doctor.

You approve of the subjects; I make bold to say that you must therefore excuse the conclusions. A hackneyed question can only be treated by bringing out new solutions of it, and new ideas must necessarily contradict those which have preceded them. The choice of my subjects necessarily caused the temerity of my conclusions. Moreover, I had the support of Leibnitz, while the regulations for the Doctorate, which ask that theses should bring to Science something new, seemed to authorize my innovations.

I will not here speak of my proofs—they are in my theses; nor of the care I have brought to bear on those researches—my work will vouch for that. You advise me to peruse Reid: I have been brought up in his doctrines, and as lately as last year I wrote a lengthy analysis of his writings.

I must merely defend myself against general reproaches and accusations of tendencies; no, Sir, I am not a Sceptic or a Materialist, any more than Aristotle or Leibnitz, who have been my guides in my researches and the first authors of my solutions.

I do not, any more than Reid, doubt the existence of the exterior world. My thesis admits all his arguments. The first is the impossibility of doing otherwise; the second is the goodness of the Supreme Cause, who would not have deceived us; the third is the harmony between the events and our beliefs. The two first are Descartes', and the third Leibnitz'. There is nothing to alter in them, and I alter nothing; I merely add a fourth. In studying the construction of our illusory representations, I show that

they must give us the same knowledge as true and direct intuitions; I prove that Nature only deceives us in order to extend the boundaries of the intellect, and throws us into error but to conduct us to truth. And this proof gives the reason of all the others. It shows, by the analysis of the thinking-machine, the necessity for belief, the goodness of the Cause, and the harmony between beliefs and events.

As to the nature of the soul, I, first of all, separate Consciousness from the thinking *ego*. Alone, it is attached to the nervous system, it is that ἐντελέχεια of the body of which Aristotle speaks. Consciousness, which observes it, has no position and no extension; it is attached to no organ. Do spiritualists go as far as I do on this matter?

As for the thinking *ego*, I own that, whilst distinguishing it from pure matter, I closely unite it to the body. But is there a philosopher who does not likewise? Does any one doubt that the alterations of the nerves and of the brain alter the faculty of feeling? Is there a spiritualist, save Malebranche, who believes that after the destruction of the body we may still have sensations of cold and heat, red and blue, sweetness and bitterness? Every one admits that the soul is united to the body. My thesis states precisely in what way and up to what point; it is because it marks the junction that it can mark the separation; it is because I say with Aristotle that the thinking *ego* is the ἐντελέχεια of the nervous system that I can say with Descartes that Consciousness, or pure Thought, has nothing in common with the body.

These explanations will be developed and made clearer if the Faculty does me the honour of hearing me in support of my theses. Materialism and scepticism seem to me not

a doctrine, but a disease—not a system, but an impotency of system. It suffices to seek seriously in order to believe in Truth, and to live within oneself to believe in the spirit.

Finally, perhaps the consequences of my thesis will earn your indulgence for me. The thinking *ego* is the only object in the universe where we may observe directly the union of Force and Matter, of the simple and the multiple, of the Soul and the Body. There is the great problem of natural science, and yet, condemned as it is to perceive outside appearances only, Natural Science can only solve it by hypotheses and conjectures. For Physics and Natural Science only make conjectures, only perceiving the outer appearance of objects. Psychology solves them experimentally by analysing the relations of the nervous system and of the thinking *ego*. The *ego* in its inferior faculties touches the natural world and sums it up. The study of it is the abbreviated study of the natural world. Now, if, as I think I have proved, our ideas are but the consciousness of our representations, it is clear that the entire system of our ideas depends on the representative faculty. But desires are born of ideas, the will fixes itself according to desires, and actions obey the will. The whole moral world therefore depends on the representative faculty, and it is by decomposing it that the moral world can be analysed in its principle. Therefore the object of which I treat plunges into both worlds at once, for it sums up the one and determines the other; the theories which explain it stir up the whole of Philosophy. On that account, perhaps, a new solution of the question may not be unworthy of being submitted to the view of the Faculty.

I should be glad, Sir, if the Faculty would deign to en-

courage by its approval some obstinate researches, a part of which I now offer it, and which I shall no doubt continue all my life; it would be in vain that I should seek in Literature, according to your advice, an easier path and a happier future; only a long experience can persuade me that I am entirely unfitted for the only studies I love.

My great desire is to pass the examination before the holidays; I ardently wish to receive your corrections in time to be ready, if you think fit, to present myself in August.

I am sending my two theses to the Dean of Faculty.

Kindly accept, Sir, the feelings of respect with which I have the honour to be your obedient servant.

To his Mother.

June 7, 1852.

I have gone to see the Rector, who tells me that nothing is changed in the Decree on the *agrégation*: it is independent of the law which is about to be made. Therefore, no *agrégation* for me this year. I am thus thrown back upon the Doctorate, and the Rector here has my theses to send them to the Paris Dean. There is nothing to fear. They are only about pure science and new experiments. The examiner, in his letter, reproached me with dangerous tendencies; I have softened risky passages, and I have just written him a "honeyed and serpentine" letter, as Sophie would say, to the effect that my thesis is perfectly virtuous, composed for the greater glory of God and the King, and that its tendencies are precisely the contrary of what he blames. The only danger is that I am bringing

out entirely new ideas and an important theory. Will they understand? Will this sudden invention frighten them? That is the question. I shall write to you as soon as I have an answer.

I have peacefully taken the oaths; it was in conformity with my opinions to do so. I refused to adhere to the 2nd December; the action was unjust and illegal, and violated my great dogma of the Sovereignty of the nation. Now this man has a legitimate power, conferred by universal will; I obey the law, as I disapproved of usurpation, and for the same reason. I have the firmest intention of making no propaganda against him and of taking part in no conspiracy. My oath has only made public and official the most voluntary of resolutions.

Unfortunately, several of my friends did not think likewise. M. Libert, and M. Magy, who was a Master at the École, have resigned. M. Barthélemy St. Hilaire, to whom my uncle had introduced me, M. Simon,[1] M. Despois, M. Barni, M. Bersot, many of the History and Philosophy Professors have been discharged; the tallest flower spikes have been cut down. It makes promotion, but the future is ugly. Yet it would be a help if I could become a Doctor,

[1] Letter from M. Jules Simon to M. Taine, December, 1851: "I thank you for your expressions of affection. I did not for a moment doubt that you would be one of those who will feel most regret at this breaking of my career. I may not have been so great a philosopher as those of my colleagues who have preserved their chairs at the École and at the Sorbonne, and who now bitterly complain that *I compromised* them; but I have that conviction that during eighteen years' teaching I have ever raised and never debased the minds and characters of my pupils. Let them say as much if they can."

and I have in view a prize offered by the Academy of Moral Science. If I had those two diplomas, I might rise after all.

My friend Prévost has gained the Académie Française prize for eloquence. It will open to him the columns of newspapers and reviews, and will start his literary career; he will succeed sooner than I, but we shall each have chosen the path best suited to his tastes. Work and pleasure in scientific discoveries console me for everything. It is fatiguing, but it prevents me from dwelling upon sad things; I am not so happy now that my theses are finished. I think of our long separation, our rare meetings. . . . It is only by living as I do, in abstract science that one can dispense with companionship.

Those who lack this passion do not know what to do with themselves; my schoolfellows get married or take to cafés, or become as dull as caged birds. How nice it would be if you could settle down in the Ardennes whilst I am sent from place to place! It would be a home towards which I should always direct my eyes from the bottom of my pit.

Are my sisters posing before their brother? Do they write to a friend or to a professor of French and spelling? Is it not enough to be a pedant in my class and to bear its official title written on my forehead! Let my sisters at least forget the ridiculous black gown and square cap which disfigure my unfortunate person, and write to me about whatever comes into their heads, calls, music, reading, conversations, what feelings the country inspires in them, in what way they change and in what way they remain the same. Good heavens, do not let us pose to each other! there is enough acting in the world already,

let us be free between ourselves. Sometimes I have fits of musical rage; I shut myself up and improvise fantastic and demoniacal pieces, ridiculous no doubt in composition and harmony, but which express my thoughts and make me happy. It is all I ask. A piano is a magnificent instrument, the velocity of the fingers accumulates notes at any distance, and one can play in chords. Big chords played with all the fingers of both hands, during a whole piece, have an infinite majesty! and recall in a small way the music of an organ, as that of Meyerbeer.

I sometimes call on two young men who play flute duets with much taste; it is very suave, and soothes the mind like a summer breeze.

Now that I am writing of pastoral things, I must tell you that I have twice been out in the country. About a league out of Poitiers there are woods and solitary meadows. There, everything else is easily forgotten! I lay in the grass and it seemed to me that I had but to let myself live, that I had no more ambition, no more cares, and that every one could be as happy as myself. The country is an opiate for troubled brains.

Why should you not send me descriptions of society about you. Mine is insipid enough save for M. Saigey; he goes out a great deal. Should I go out? I have such a short time left here; it seems almost certain that I shall leave Poitiers in September. And what should I say? My friend tells me that conversation is altogether on the subject of other people and of the news of the day; I should not have time to become acquainted with gossips, and as soon as I knew something about it I should have to go.

Besides, if my thesis is accepted I shall have the proofs of it to correct. I shall see one or two people, and the rest of the time I think I shall stop at home. It is the most comfortable thing to do if one's time and occupations are well regulated. Little pleasures brighten one's life; a cup of coffee makes me happy for two hours.

Dear Ninette (Virginie) what say you of the spring? Is not your artist soul ravished? I never tire of admiring the sky and the trees in the sunshine after the rain. I think I might have been a landscape painter. It seems to me that everthing may lend itself to a picture. The commonest places become splendid in certain lights. Just now, as I was walking home, I saw a hideous, stony, tortuous and deserted street, peopled with cold, decent, dull, middle-class houses. It was cut in two by the light; one half of the sky, black and coppery, threw a part of it into darkness, with a metallic reflection, and the rest of it shone in the purest sunlight.

The sun is a great artist; I understand that men like Rembrandt should have spent their lives in the love of lights and shades. Great masses of simple colour have a soul, and it makes one happy to look at them.

I am going to the Confirmation to-morrow (by order!). The Bishop is giving it to the boys in the College; he is said to be eloquent; perhaps I shall enjoy it. One of my pupils (I have chosen the one who gets highest marks at the religious lectures) will address him in a short speech, which I have corrected and made as brief and as simple as I could. Just fancy, the Chaplain wanted me to write a French or Latin ode with my own hand, and to put it in the mouth of one of my young starlings! You can

imagine how I hastened to reject such a suggestion. The funniest part of it is that he wanted a dithyrambico-pindarico-galimatiaco-logical ode with full orchestra on the sublimity and present importance of a priest's profession! He had indeed come to the wrong shop! It is enough to be flogged without having to kiss the rod.

To Édouard de Suckau.

MEIN LIEBLING,—The fault was yours, I was awaiting an answer. Besides, as you rightly guessed, I was in travail; the parent and twin progeny are doing well. Alas, my dear boy, wish them life and prosperity! They were given up to the Rector a week ago, and are no doubt at this moment between the licensed claws of M. Garnier. O, good Garnier, adored Garnier, ἵλεως ἐστω καὶ πρᾶος: *Sancte Reid, ora pro nobis.* What will happen, old man? I joined to my thesis a serpentlike letter, proving that I added demonstrations to dogmatism and to spiritualism. But I say so much that is new! I bristle with horror and, like the Saints, I await the Last Judgment in fear and trembling. It seems to me that the august Doctor's diploma, cap and gown, flee from my sight, saying, "Never to return." I read Hegel's *Philosophy of History* in order to divert my mind from it all.

I do not know what to say to you about my conclusions, my Ed.; there is no means of summing up in one page one hundred and sixty pages written in Civil Code style. Yet here are a few points: 1° The soul, insomuch as it is capable of Feeling, but *not* of Consciousness, is the ἐντελέχεια of the nervous system, extended and indivisible. 2° The sensations

are the modifications of the *ego* in the nerves. Modifications analogous to the sensations take place in the brain during sensation, and are reproduced afterwards under the name of Images. 3° Consciousness, though a system of natural illusion and involuntary abstractions, perceives in the present individual *ego* the past, the future, the non-ego, the universal. 4° The whole forms one faculty, the representative faculty, and solves the following problem: given a Consciousness, extend its bearings and pass its boundaries by making known to it the past, the future, the *non-ego*, the universal. In my opinion, the machine which solves the question is of a magnificent simplicity and complexity, and invincibly proves that Nature tends towards Science.

And you, Sir, who make a pretence of writing me a letter, what do I know of your ideas? You are a miser, a sultan, a Gobseck. Quick, raise the veil, show your mysterious beauties and your philosophical crimes.

> Tum victor madido prosilias toro
> Nocturni referens prælii vulnera.

Where do you find enough rose-water, skim-milk, and Catholic perfumes to disguise the penetrating odour of that Spinozic Liberty which you intend to serve at the banquet of the Sorbonnians. A regular den of sanctimonious cats, my dear fellow! Come, give me some details, or at least your formulæ in the rough. I expect my theses back in a month. It seems that they will take an infinite time turning them over, playing with them, scratching them, etc. Then three weeks at the printer's! After that, I fall into your arms in Paris, and, with you, lay Academic laurels on Anatole's brow.

What nonsense I do write to you! *A propos* of that I want to consult you, Psychologist, on a personal psychological fact. Listen to this extraordinary contradiction. I thought I should cool down in the provinces; I am dieting myself with pure abstractions; the ἐντελέχεια, images, and representations have nothing heating about them; it seems to me that I ought to cease to be a man and become a mere idea. Well, no, my friend. I have just been reading George Sand's *Compagnons du Tour de France*, and my soul is boiling over. There is a physical and moral stir in my heart and mind, of the like of which I had no idea. And this is constantly the case. What is this flowing fountain of all sorts of passions which has suddenly sprung forth within me? Why such abrupt manners, such hurried speech and exalted words? Why am I obliged to read no newspapers, and to avoid all religious or political conversation for fear I should escape?

Why do I feel my blind and fiery beast pulling at the bridle and bounding forward every minute? There are days when I could beat myself, when I feel I must strike at something corporal or spiritual. What devil of an animal is it which has awakened within me? Do you know it? It troubles me very much. Try and send me its pedigree. Dear old friend, how often I long for you to soothe me!

> Tout respire en Esther l'innocence et la paix,
> Du chagrin le plus noir elle écarte les ombres,
> Et fait des jours sereins de mes jours les plus sombres.
> —(Racine, *Esther*, Act. II. sc. vii.)

Seriously, if you were here just now, I should scamper about like a goat, and I am even now dancing a succession

of inward sarabands. And all that is the effect of a little George Sand!

H. Taine to Prévost-Paradol.

June 22, 1852.

My dear Prévost,—I not only allow you, but implore you to speak to M. Garnier. I hope he has received my thesis. It was sent to the Paris Rector, with letters for M. Garnier and M. Le Clerc, and I imagine, without, however, having any proofs of it, that the whole must have arrived. And if you have any influence on M. Garnier, obtain from him permission for my thesis (if accepted) to be returned to me at the end of July. I must have a fortnight for printing, and the judges must have them ten days before the time. I shall barely get through before the vacation, and I am most anxious to do so.

You are acquiring a deplorable habit of putting your lines six feet apart from each other, and of making each letter as tall as a house; the result is that your epistles are becoming painfully short, and I miss my Prévost dreadfully; I don't know what he is doing. Does he go out into Society, among the University *élite*, since he meets M. Garnier at ladies' houses? How far has he got with his History? I have just been reading Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, it is a fine work, though too hypothetical and not precise enough. I am chewing more and more the cud of that great philosophical fodder of which I have said a word to you, and which would consist in making a science of History, and in giving it, as to the organic world, an anatomy and a physiology.

What is the trouble[1] which has made you ill? Scold me if I am indiscreet, though, to tell the truth, there are but few questions which can be indiscreet between us.

But I do not see you, I do not know your thoughts, you are hiding in a cloud and becoming a myth. Have you by any chance remained in Pekin or in Bombay? Are you a Mandarin or a Fakir? You are forgetting me, old fellow, and in a few years' time we shall end our letters thus: "I have the honour to be, Sir, your very humble and very devoted servant."

Do you know that I have made all sorts of efforts to procure here that Review of the Academy of Moral Science which contains the question on Sleep. Impossible to obtain it. You are now my only resource and condemned to send it me yourself. You see that the laurels of Miltiades are keeping me from sleep.

Also give me M. Magy's address if you have it; after his dismissal I owe him at least a letter. Have you heard anything of Planat's means of livelihood and of the cause which removed him from the *Illustration*?

Why should you not write on Duclos.[2] Nobody has ever done so that I know of, and the Academy never proposed it for a prize. Portraits attract you, like that good La Guéronnière, and you want to beat the Sorbonne with the same weapons as the Academy.

[1] Gréard, p. 195: "I have not been well lately; it is partly due to the weather, and partly to a trouble that I have had."

[2] Prévost-Paradol had consulted M. Taine as to a subject for his thesis. Gréard, p. 195: "I want it to be: 1° On French Literature; 2° About one man; 3° In the eighteenth century; 4° A short business." He ended by writing on a historical subject, *Elizabeth and Henry IV.*

Edmond has been travelling in Mecca, and is writing about it. His ambassador follows processions, taper in hand; one of the attachés is secretary to M. de Montalembert, another has just been to Rome on a pilgrimage and on his return become a Dominican. There are but female monkeys in Athens, but some magnificent figures in Morea; unfortunately, the beauties do not work. Francisque[1] is cogitating on a thesis on Macrobus (what a subject!), and fraternizes with Dottain. Quinot is basking like a lizard in Algiers, and has been thinking for six months that perhaps it would be a good thing to decide to learn Arabic. Édouard discourses inwardly on Liberty. Why did you tell M. Simon that I had sent my thesis to M. Garnier? I wrote to the Dean, who sent me back a consultation from M. Garnier.

Since you are a friend of M. Gérusez, you might remind him that I am a countryman of his. I shall try and read the *Review of Public Instruction*. For four months I have touched no politics or any other business of the day.

Nothing new here; dreams and work.

Speak to M. Garnier. Yours.

M. Adolphe Garnier to H. Taine.[2]

June 20, 1852.

Sir,—I have read with the greatest attention the two theses which you have handed to M. le Doyen. It is not in the course of a letter that I can dispute your assertions. That, in believing that we know the exterior, we only know

[1] Sarcey; he abandoned this thesis.

[2] This letter only reached Poitiers after the preceding one had been sent.

ourselves, and that nevertheless this error happens to conform with truth, as if, in your hypothesis, you had means of knowing the truth! "that the senses deceive us and that, in consequence, their knowledge is not direct, etc., etc." All this would be matter for discussion when supporting your thesis, but the statement which I do not think possible to let you support before the Faculty, especially in the present circumstances, when the enemies of Philosophy watch it so narrowly and slander it so willingly, is this: "that there is an extended *ego*, long, broad, round, square, etc." As the opinion I have just announced would tend to make you lose the fruit of lengthy labour (your Latin thesis being but a continuation of the French one and destined to share its fate), I will not take upon myself the responsibility of a decision, and I will ask M. le Doyen to consult on this subject M. Damiron, and M. Saisset, who was your master at the École, and who bears you the friendship which you deserve for your distinguished qualities.

I sincerely wish that their impression may differ from mine, and beg of you to receive the particular compliments of your devoted servant,

ADOLPHE GARNIER.

H. Taine to Mademoiselle Sophie Taine.

June 22, 1852.

On my knees, with folded hands and downcast eyes, I humbly kiss the hem of your garment, Mademoiselle, and am ready for all possible genuflexions, prostrations, adorations and submissions, in order to untie your dumb tongue and to place a pen between your fingers.

A bailiff's warrant was necessary to draw a letter from your venerable sister. Will you be more refractory ? What is it that prevents you, during your long and dull days, from speaking your solitary thoughts to your friend and brother ? The best fruits decay if kept. And is there really any happiness in life but conversation ? Perhaps I now need it less than another might ; the world in which I live is so abstract and unfrequented that I have given up looking for company. But, whenever I leave it and find myself alone on my chair, or seated at my piano in the evening, our old evenings come back to my mind and I long to talk with you. Dear child, when will that time come back ?

How rose-coloured everything seems to young eyes ! I know no truer idea than that saying of Chateaubriand's : " If I still believed in happiness, I should look for it in habit." To distribute one's time so that it should always be occupied, to work in a consecutive manner even at an uninteresting work, to direct a household, to have a profession that, on the whole, is a happy life. Poor happiness is it not ? but it is the only one there is. I experienced it, much to my astonishment, when I copied out my thesis. At first the idea appalled me ! 150 pages to transcribe, adding or retouching bits here and there, inventing nothing, originating nothing ! it seemed to me but cobbler's work ! I set to work through sheer necessity and continued with positive pleasure ; an effort was constantly required to correct a passage or to make it more lucid, dullness was taken away, and success brought joy along with it. And then the work was progressing like a growing child or an increasing fortune, and the insensible growth delighted me. We were wrong to despise this regular and mechanical

life. I sometimes find pleasure even—and a relaxation always—in correcting the hideous mistakes of the flock of geese of whom I am the keeper.

Occupation and the constant pursuit of some object slowly approached is healthy life, the rest is disease. My science tells me that great joys and great passions are but excesses, alterations, overturnings, and that, consequently, a man experiencing many of them would cease to be able to act, to feel and to live. This is sad and true. There are but two régimes in this world : 1° opium, intoxication, ecstasy, languor, sickness and death ; and 2° boiled beef, monotony, boredom and health ; on that prose, a little poetry, perhaps, a few flowers by those insipid dishes—Art, conversation, the country, added to the daily flatness of work and housekeeping. Such is the extent of my present ideal. A practical life alters a man, does it not ? and what I am saying sounds provincial and old-fashioned !

Alas, my dear, I have lost the rose-coloured glasses through which I used to look at things, and now that I see the world with unencumbered eyes, everything seems to me black or dark grey.

I know nothing yet of my thesis, I do not even know whether I shall get an answer before August. In any case the prize-giving here is for the 10th, and the Faculty vacates on the 30th. I can and must therefore only stay in Paris from the 10th to the 30th, unless you wish to spend the holidays there, in which case I shall have the honour and joy of being your respectful attendant.

PROFESSORSHIP

To Édouard de Suckau.

June 27, 1852.

MY DEAR OLD MAN,—Do not mention what I am going to tell you until the affair is definitely settled. M. Garnier has just answered that my theses are scandalous, that the extended *ego* is a heresy, but that before refusing me, he is going to submit the matter to MM. Saisset and Damiron. I am writing a strong though polite letter to M. Saisset, urging on him the fact that the Faculty prints on the theses that it neither approves nor blames, and that I can therefore compromise it in no wise; also that I merely developed a phrase of Aristotle's and one of Leibnitz, and that all the precedents are in my favour; that, moreover, I expressly said that the *feeling* ego alone is extended, and proved that Consciousness is without position or extension, attached to no organ, which is Descartes' own doctrine, and finally that it would be absurd to close the mouths of Descartes, Leibnitz and Aristotle. I conclude by suggesting many corrections which would not materially alter my meaning. I am now awaiting an answer, but without much hope. They are intolerant cowards, and nothing is worse than inquisitorial hares. If they reject me, I know a M. Bertereau here who is Professor of Philosophy, I shall try here. If I get the degree it does not much matter whether I am a Poitiers or a Paris doctor, as long as I have no more to do with that flock of shivering birds. This is the second storm which breaks over me because I could not resign myself to official banality. This is an unfortunate year; *agrégation* failure, Philosophy *agrégation* suppressed, Literature *agrégation* prepared and then suppressed,

Doctorate practically lost! I find every door slammed in my face. What could I do? I had no subject but Philosophy, nothing in History, save Germany, which would have been climbing the scaffold. In dogma I am fit for the latter, and what I had chosen seemed least perilous. The devil take it all! I shall let you know when I have an answer. Do write to cheer me up. I cheer myself up by thinking that I have my thesis anyhow. It is the beginning of a big work which I have in my mind, and I seriously believe it is new and good. I forget my troubles now in working on a *Theory of the Intellect.* I soar in space; the earth is so bad that one must fly to heaven.

But you, dear friend, what are you doing? It is certainly not for your Doctor's degree that you are distilling the little chemical precipitate of which the three component substances are Jesus Christ, Hegel and Spinoza? Your work has become metamorphosed in your hands. I was expecting a Theory of Human Determination, and it seems to me that you are writing a treatise *De omni re scibili et quibusdam aliis.* That theory of yours that Man is God and must be substituted for God more and more, is that a morality? Send me your title and tell me in which of Science's frames you place your picture. You will probably wait for the next Revolution before publishing that German horror, and, in all probability, you will have to wait a long time. For you say you wish to be lucid and popular and avoid the abstractions which are too exalted to be easily intelligible. My dear fellow; vulgarisators are the very first to be burnt; innocent brains which do no good to any one but themselves are sometimes tolerated, the others never. Hegel only endured by acting a Christian parade in his philo-

sophical theatre, by changing the nature of the dogma to accommodate it to his science; by saying, for instance, that religion is true because it has proclaimed a Man-God, and that Man is God. If I save myself at the Faculty, it will be by sounding the drum on Descartes and Aristotle, by crushing atomistic materialists, preaching spirituality and disguising mortality. Let us think for ourselves, let us do like Leibnitz, who used to print fifteen copies of his works and send them to his friends. Let us leave the fools—i.e. everybody—to follow the natural bent and join us in three thousand years' time. All the efforts you want to make to set their heavy waggon in motion will not make it advance one inch. Let us speak to those minds who have the will and the power, and wait for better times before shouting, You will be in Paris in a few days; read my thesis if it is still there.

But, my dear Ed., I dare to proffer a request; you will have three months for your family and the metropolis. Will you be good enough to abstract a week therefrom, and to take your flight into the Ardennes with me, when I can show you my woods and streams? It will be the only way of having a real good talk. We shall meet in Paris, but I should like to have you all to myself. Do, do say you will!

Prévost is writing for the *Instruction Publique*; I am afraid he is sinking into academical ways; his articles are not amusing enough. But he praises Gérusez and acquires importance and friends. One day we will go to applaud his reception into the Academy.

Edmond has been round the Morea, and finds Athens a blank. He is writing about his travels and says that

he has for the first time experienced the sentiment of the Beautiful.

Nothing here new; I am rather tired, but working nevertheless. My piano is pretty good, and I have a sofa. My greatest pleasure is the companionship of an old schoolfellow, a Polytechnician, witty and with an open mind.

But when shall I have you, my Ed., my dear Ed.? If we could go to the same town! It is possible, for now I wish to stick to literature. In a little while I should find it impossible to teach philosophy. Heretical gangrene grows in me every day; and you?

My Latin thesis is on Exterior Perception.

To his Mother.

July 6, 1852.

Where and how shall I end the year? I know nothing as yet; I have had an answer from Paris, but they are making difficulties as to the conclusions of my thesis; I shall only have a definite decision when two other Professors have been consulted; one is M. Saisset, my former master. I have written to him politely but strongly, pointing out to him that those of my ideas which are considered dangerous are already to be found in the most accepted Philosophers, that I have conformed to all the regulations, that I am sending two entirely original theses, solving two difficulties hitherto declared to be inexplicable, and especially that the Faculty declares on the title page of every thesis that it neither approves nor blames the opinions of the candidates, that its responsibility is therefore covered, etc. . . . If they throw me out there remains one door to me here: I know a M. Bertereau, Professor of Philo-

sophy, and perhaps I may be able to pass! But all this is yet very uncertain; be assured that you will have the first news I receive.

It is difficult to make one's way, is it not? I am reminded at this moment of a great maxim which we read in Stendthal[1] last year: "Under an absolute government the first condition of success is to have neither enthusiasm nor wit." Our great official men here are indeed admirable. The Rector is a former professor of grammar, dry, narrow-minded, pedantic, dogmatical, a regular rumbling wheel, who would like me to spend my time in correcting my pupils' mistakes in punctuation. The Provisor has the same origin, but he is but soft paste, a plug of cotton-wool who is nothing by himself and gives way to every impression without preserving a single one. The longer I live the lower I bring down the level at which my mind had placed mankind; I think I shall have to bring it yet lower to reach the proper height.

Nevertheless, I am working at a thing which in a few years' time may become a work. It is my life, my refuge, perhaps my future. I have but few favourable chances in the great official road; one only progresses in it with tortoise steps, and great promotion is bought by great acts of cowardice or by a natural servility. The Government itself declares that it will take less account of talent than of moral guarantees; that is why the competition has been suppressed; the competition which remains is no longer for merit but for obedience. I will not go in for that, you would not wish me to. Only a book seems possible, and, politics being forbidden, only Science remains.

[1] *La Chartreuse de Parme.*

Now I find in myself a quantity of ideas, I see an uncultivated field; I have strong arms and I will plough it. I hope to begin with practical things in order to attract readers. There is the future. Let us look that way when trouble falls on me and let us cheer each other up. I am submerged for a moment, but this hope sets me afloat again; let us sail merrily!!

To Édouard de Suckau.

July 17, 1852.

DEAR ED.,—I expected the death sentence. Thank you for all your trouble, and see that you profit by the lesson for your own thesis. The intolerance is worse perhaps than you imagine; M. Simon writes that they have just refused a thesis on Saint-Martin by Caro (the Catholic).[1] They want the candidates to write second editions of their manuals.

The charming Saisset[2] acted a play before you, old fellow! A professor from this place who went to Paris

[1] Caro, of the Académie Française, b. 1826, d. 1887. His thesis was accepted nevertheless; it is entitled *Mysticism in the Eighteenth Century.*

[2] Letter from E. de Suckau written on July 10, after calling on M. Taine's examiners: "M. Damiron had read your thesis *rather quickly*, but *had seen before he had read half* that it was out of the question that you should be allowed to support it. He said that when addressing a Faculty, and knowing its ideas, it would be presumption to expect it to accept others. . . . He had looked up your antecedents, and had heard of your ideas on Liberty and on other things. He thought you were following a disastrous train of thought which would never lead you to a Doctor's degree through Philosophy. He advised you to take up a literary subject. . . . Of M. Garnier, I only extracted this word: 'I shall never consent

ten days ago, spoke of my thesis to the Dean, who told him that it had just been read by the little man and handed to M. Damiron. They have not yet sent it back. Since it is lost, drag it out of their clutches and read it. I have a rough copy of it, but it is very untidy and it would take me ten days to copy it out. He found my letter unintelligible in order to avoid answering it. My mistake consists in having believed in their advertisement, in having thought that they were in good faith asking for "discoveries" (see Regulations). Spectators will do well not to be taken in by the show at the door! When they are inside their necks are wrung. It is the story of La Fontaine's turkey: I ought to have seen the cook and the carving knife and known that they were about to place me

> Comfortably in a large dish,
> An honour which the bird
> Easily would have renounced.

Ugh! Let us shake hands, and to the devil with the Inquisitors.

We absolutely must find means of spending four or five days together. Think of it! Another year without meet-

that one should speak of an extended *ego*; it is too coarse.'" M. Saisset had received from you a letter which was unintelligible to him. Your thesis had not been in his hands, and he had not thought proper to ask to see it. . . . At the École, everything might be discussed privately, and nobody need know anything about it; but at the Sorbonne it is not the same thing, everybody looks on. It is not *good sense* (his own words) to speak on Philosophy without taking any account of public opinion. . . . M. Saisset thinks that the ruin of the University and of philosophic teaching was consummated by your lesson at the Sorbonne. *Inde iræ.*"

ing! we should not recognize each other. My Ardennes are quite near, and really pretty. If you come, I shall love you as much as you deserve (superlative!). In any case, do not start before August 15. The last written examination here is on the 10th and the prize-giving on the 17th; but I shall get out of the prize-giving and try to gather my examination Committee together. (Would you believe that here each composition is corrected by three Professors; three texts are sent up for the Rector to choose from, etc.—absurd punctiliousness!) You must understand that our philosophical productions must communicate with each other, and my *Sensation* needs to embrace your *Liberty*. Letters are tables of contents; the book is required, I want to read you; find a means.

Your news distresses me. Poor M. Vacherot! He giving private lessons![1] M. Simon a private tutor! A Government is indeed strong when it holds people by famine. If you see M. Vacherot, offer him my sympathy; I did not know that that oath had been asked nor that he had refused it. Is then our promise such a grave thing? and have we committed a mean action? Seriously, I thought not, and I still think not. We obey the national will, we promise to make no plots, no propaganda; is that dishonouring ourselves?

Nothing from Anatole; what is he doing? Has he finished with his Chinese? Crouslé writes distressing news from

[1] "M. Vacherot is one of the most unfortunate, he has not only himself to think of and is anxious about his family. His friends are trying to dissuade him from refusing, and are giving the best advice, that of example. He has not been able to make up his mind to it . . . he is looking for some private pupils."

the École: they are going to turn it into a Latin verse factory. Here it is the same thing; the compressing machine is working everywhere. I have one consolation here, Saigey (Polytechnique, formerly Bourbon), a mind open to everything, the contrary of a *bourgeois*. That is the word, and our Philosophy is a Romantic of 1828, struggling against La Harpe and Delille. I also have Hegel's *History of Religions*; I go in for Historical Psychology. It takes us out of Garnier's bogs; have you read his book ?[1] I am told it is a copy of the Scotsmen, with an infinitesimal division of the faculties.

I have half a mind to go to M. Le Clerc and to say to him: "Sir, kindly give me a subject and some conclusions for my thesis!" Will they accept something aesthetical, a theory of styles, a study on La Fontaine ? etc. . . .

My Rector is sending up a report concerning us. I have obtained a testimony to my habits and morals, political and otherwise; he added a note of what we ask. I have asked to be sent to a town where there is a Faculty of Science. I should of course waive that desire if I had a chance of being sent to the same town as you. If you see the potentates, try, and choose for me if M. Lesieur offers you something.

I have learnt many things about life during the past year! And you too, have you not ?

Thanks again so much, my dear good fellow.

[1] Treatise on *The Faculties of the Soul*, published in 1852.

To Mademoiselle Virginie Taine.

July 20, 1852.

Bad news on my side. My thesis is not yet definitely refused, but it is very nearly so; the work, style, etc., are praised, but the ideas being new, and, the regulations requiring new ideas, my thesis is not admissible. I have been silly enough to take literally the official proclamations, the posters on the door! All that is bait for fools, and the true regulations for the Doctorate are these: to write 200 meaningless pages; to analyse some old forgotten author who is deservedly so; to judge of him in accordance with recognized ideas, and to copy the manual of one of those gentlemen. But it is the same thing everywhere, all things have a false face; as I live, I learn to live; people shout at the top of their voices that honesty is necessary, in private they joke about it, and the honest man is he who puts on a neat tie and thieves in secret. People ask loudly for ideas and discoveries; what they really want is imitation, second-hand, commonplace. I understand now why nearly all the masters we met seemed to us so insignificant; they were so, and that was why they had succeeded. A struggle necessarily ensues, youths despise their masters, and the old ones pocket money and contempt.

This is not a rejected author's anger! All those who are worth anything are now in the mud. Poor M. Vacherot has lost his salary, and is looking for private lessons. The École is an Inquisition. M. Simon earns his living by working for Hachette, and giving lessons to the son of M. Goudchaux. The others are starving. Happy are

those who, like myself, can live. He writes to me,[1] that his friend, M. Caro (a good Catholic, a professor at Rennes), has also just been refused by the Faculty. His thesis had cost him eighteen months' work, and good judges declare it to be excellent. M. de Suckau, who was about to send his, is pocketing it again, hoping for better times.

There is no chance of staying here next year. The Professor will come back to his post, and I shall be sent where God pleases. The Rector has promised to give the Government on my behalf a certificate of good morals, political and otherwise.

I shall try to leave here on the 15th; I shall have nothing to do in Paris but a few business calls, and to see my friends. It will be necessary to do so in order to inform myself of what is going on in the Uuiversity; here it is a bog, and the newspapers are as dumb as fishes. My life is not very pleasant; a lot of scamps whom I have to punish and whose papers make me sick; complete solitude, save for a few conversations with an old Bourbon schoolfellow. My pleasures consist in dreaming in my arm-chair or in walking out at four in the morning by a little river by the meadows, looking at the light on the grass and on the water. A poor sort of happiness! yet we are infinitely

[1] Letter from Jules Simon to H. Taine, July 16, 1852: "They have just refused Caro's thesis, after eighteen months' labour on his part. I may say that the Faculty has lately admitted several Doctors whose theses did not come near that one—I have read it. You are beginning to learn that reputation, success, and talent are three things with absolutely no natural connection between them. I seriously look upon talent and a noble character as upon two almost insurmountable obstacles; and that is why, my dear boy, one should be an honest man and try not to be a fool."

happier than those poor beasts of burden whom we call workmen or labourers, cobblers and greengrocers! and that is consoling. It is inaccurate to say that women are more bored than men because they have no regular work; professional work is as monotonous as housekeeping, and a greater servitude. It is impossible to imagine the disgust I experience when correcting those papers; add to that the sheet of ice which life in the provinces lays on one's shoulders. I only keep afloat and work by dint of sheer strength of will.

Everything is in the future; I have an idea for a work which I have begun, which will last ten years, and which I believe to be great and new. Will it be read? Will it deserve to be? I am a chrysalis, and I will play pitch and toss for my butterfly's wings when I have spun them in silence in my study.

To M. Léon Crouslé.

July 27, 1852.

MY DEAR CROUSLÉ,—I shall probably be in Paris on August 18 or 19. I suppose you will still be at the École? I shall stay four or five days and come and shake hands with you.

You have no doubt heard of my second discomfiture. Suckau says that no definite decision has been come to; but it is all over. They think my conclusions scandalous, and your dear second-year Professor says that "there is no *good sense* in presenting to the Faculty opinions which it does not profess." A good thing to know! When I get to Paris, I shall go to the Dean and propose to him a

Literature thesis (on La Fontaine[1] as a fabulist; I studied it for the *agrégation*), ask him for his conclusions, etc. . . . I am quite resigned and even indifferent. The important thing for me is to live for ten years, giving up two hours a day to some work or other, in some town or other. Between a *licencié* or a Doctor; in a first or third-class *lycée* the difference is nil. For us, the University is no longer a career, but a means of living to be preserved solely for that reason; my only bother is to be obliged to lose a few more months in those ridiculous examinations. All I should wish would be to have some free time so as to worship my gods quietly. They have lost their vague

[1] The notebook on La Fontaine, filled at the beginning of the year with a view to the *agrégation*, contains notes on fables by Babrius, Æsop, Phædrus, La Fontaine, Lessing; on Phædrus and La Fontaine; on the difference of style betweed Æsop and La Fontaine; on principal points to be noted in La Fontaine; action and composition in La Fontaine; lastly, a plan and a *Résumé Littéraire*. Here is the plan:

"Of Fable in general, taken in the abstract. Enumerate and define its parts, and examine in each what corresponds to it in La Fontaine.

"1, Of the primitive element of Fable; animals and an allegory. Gnomic, moral, and scientific primitive character, changed by La Fontaine into a poetical one (opposition of the Scientific and the Poetic, of the formula and the drama)." The rest of the work is a demonstration of the word *poetic*.

"2, Conditions of a Poetic Fable: General theory of Poetry:

(*a*) Characters and Morals.
(*b*) Action and Composition.
(*c*) Style (compare with Phædrus, Æsop, and the Middle Ages).
(*d*) Character of the Poet.
(*e*) Description of the particular Character of the Poet, of his morals; anti-religious, anti-aristocratic, etc., malicious, Greek, Gaulois, etc., etc.

and universal form, and have now become condensed in a work which will last for several years, and about which I will tell you when we meet. I am a good mother hen, and I will patiently sit on my egg; it seems to me that I can already hear the chick knocking at the shell with its beak.

Latonæ tacitum pertentant gaudia pectus. It seems to me, my poor friend, that you are not particularly happy at the École and that Governmental Bumbledom is whipping you with pickled rods. Are you still under arrest? You know, their reasoning is sound at bottom, and the studies and spirit of the old school were absolutely contrary to their University. You will have been the last of the Romans. We are governed by Rectors and Provisors who all have lived in the provinces for twenty years, and been Professors for ten years. You cannot imagine, old fellow, what the provinces and a Professor's life make of a man. To lose all brightness, all delicacy, all boldness of mind, speak of literature and science as a rolling-mill might of iron or a reel might of cotton, to substitute by some insensible crystallization a grocer's soul to an artist's soul, to be nothing but a licensed seller of instruction and taste, to exhale that stale and mouldy smell which is the worst of all—those are the least of our symptoms. My colleagues appal me and I feel like that drunkard, who, when he saw another asleep against a milestone, said in a melancholy tone, "And that is what I shall be like on Monday!" Those who have just left the École chafe and jib against the heavy hands which try to curb them to the regulation trot; they struggle against the choking moral surroundings in which they are drowning. That

is why the École is a bad institution, and must necessarily be suppressed or stupefied.

I have become quite Universitarian, I hope; I have learnt to my cost what life is; the Rector has promised me a favourable report on my behaviour; I repeat to myself every day that those who die at Surat must hold a cow's tail in hand. One more lesson in my neighbourhood: Treille, who had gone up with me to the École, and who was Professor of Rhetoric at Loudun, has just been suspended for a newspaper article in which he praised a local actress. A professor must be like a priest nowadays!

You have no more lectures, you lucky fellows! You read and chat, I scarcely read and never chat now. But we will do so next month, will we not?

I should like to have M. Magy's address. Édouard tells me that he is in Belgium. I owe him a letter, and if you know anything about him, I shall be pleased to have news of him.

To his Mother.

July 27, 1852.

I shall leave here about the 18th, and shall probably remain four or five days in Paris to pay calls, see friends, and consult the Faculty on a new subject for a thesis. (A literary thesis on La Fontaine's fables.) I shall ask them for their conclusions, obtain for my ideas a preliminary certificate of insipidity and innocuity; I shall cast off all those they do not admit, and, if I have enough left, I shall try my fortune once again; a little work during the holidays, and the thing will be done about the middle of next year.

Quite seriously, I am perfectly calm, and no longer troubling about my second discomfiture. The harm is not very great, my work remains, and it is so much done for the big book I want to write. Only it is a bother to have to waste several months in writing out literary commonplaces and ineptitudes for the *agrégation*. I repeat what I have said a hundred times; the University is no longer a future for us. It is a tent inside which I am taking shelter from the rain for a few years, in order to think in peace without getting wet or frozen. It is not a pretty tent, but it is sufficient for my purpose, and I shall try during that time to weave for myself a substantial cloak which will allow me to resist the bad weather.

To Prévost-Paradol.

August 1, 1852.

MY DEAR PRÉVOST,—You are goodness itself. Unfortunately you are a friend of the author and of the heresy he sets forth, so that I must discount two-thirds of your praises. Still what remains is nice enough to console me if I wanted to be consoled. But it is all healed, old fellow; better still, I have the materials and the complete plan of a second memoir (on Cognition) which I shall write after the holidays, and which is better than the first.

You will see in it, amongst other things, the proof that the intelligence can have no other object than the extended, feeling, *ego*, and that it is as inseparable from it as vital force from matter, etc. Also a theory on the unique faculty (that of Abstraction) which distinguishes man from the animals and which is the causation of Religion, Society, Art and Language; finally the principles of a Philosophy

of History. I even want, if your ears are patient, to tell you the plan of a great scientific edifice of which all this is the beginning and which will keep me occupied during the next five or six years. Since I sent up my thesis I have read almost all Hegel's writings on the Philosophy of Man.

Are you reassured? Does this look like being discouraged?[1] The machine is wound up, old fellow, and it will work until the end, whatever happens.

My troubles come from other things. First, this profession, provincial life, little pin-pricks, my pupils' stupidity, etc. . . . The one consolation is that it takes but two hours a day. Add the certitude of being and remaining small, a slave driven by the Universitarian Muphtis.

"Who in his life has not a grain of ambition?" The little grain, though crushed, continues to germinate, and very much philosophy is required to accustom oneself to spend one's life at Poitiers or at Draguignan amongst vexations and in solitude.

As to a future in the University, I have none; I know but one means of having one, which is to find a Madonna who will nod to me, and to make a public Communion. Unfortunately, the Madonna has yet to be found. My worldly future is equally blank. Your beautiful style will be read; but who is there that cares about philosophy? And amongst those who cast their eyes in that direction, how many are there who do not make of it a political

[1] Gréard, p. 197: "I should not speak to you so much about yourself if I had not had bad news of the state of your mind. That mind of yours belongs to us all, remember, and you must keep it sharp and shining; it is our best sword."

weapon? I may find in France six cellar rats like myself and four inquisitive men like yourself who will read my writings; and if I do write, it is for the pleasure of seeing my ideas neatly strung together, and of looking at myself in the glass with my new necklace on.

One has to suppress within oneself a mass of desires, as you know; and it is not to be done in a day.

As to my thesis, my dear fellow, I was misled by three things: the regulations for the Doctor's degrees, which does not hold the Faculty responsible for theses; M. Hatzfeld's thesis,[1] in which he boldly supported theocratic opinions; finally an author's intoxication. My syllogisms appeared to me in a dazzling light, and I thought that whilst rejecting the doctrines they would accept the whole as a consistent hypothesis. I think (what say you?) that I shall propose to M. Le Clerc a thesis on La Fontaine's fables, I studied the subject for the *agrégation*, and it seems to me that one could find therein a good deal to say that is new (i.e. compare him to other fabulists who only try to prove a maxim; the fable magnified into a heroic drama, a study of character; the character of the king, of the courtiers, etc.; oppose La Fontaine's genius, a Greek and Flemish one, to that of his time).

We can think together of something for the Latin thesis. I intend to be in Paris on the 17th and 18th, to stay there for five or six days, and to return again on October 1 with my mother. We shall have time to meet.

But why do you only talk to me of myself instead of telling me about your work? How far have you got? Well, anyhow, we shall have a talk.

[1] On Plato.

As to my work, old fellow, do correct whatever you dislike, without waiting for my opinion. You are quite right about *exteriorizing*, *dupery*, etc. . . . but it would be a miracle if one's language did not become barbarous from reading Hegel and the physiologists. Correct me, by all means. You made me laugh by speaking of the poetry of page 122 (I don't know which it is). But my ideal model was the Civil Code, and it would be funny to consider M. Portalis and the other editors as poets. By the bye, you saw that ignominy of the competition, that matter for French oration ?

At present I am rather languishing, reading my Germans in a desultory way, and correcting the competition papers with my colleagues. Parents here would cut each other's throats if there were reason to suppose the least favour or the least error in correcting. So we are gathered, three together, under the direction of the Provisor or the Rector ; things are managed as at the Concours. I believe the Rector is sending a good account of me. I have not given a single subject of essays outside the seventeenth century or Antiquity, and I have not read or allowed to be read one single book which could give rise to the least objection.

Here is an example of the tolerance of this neighbourhood : Hemardinquer, who was *Rhetoric* assistant, had to leave because he is a Jew !

Beg Édouard, if it is not too impossible to him, to arrange somehow that I should see him during the holidays. The Highlanders and Low Bretons[1] will not be more amusing than we ! Think of us three together in your room

[1] E. de Suckau was going to Scotland or to Brittany for his holidays.

or at the theatre! It will be delightful and I embrace you both in imagination.

I shall now have all the trouble of packing—another amusement of the nomadic professor with which you are not acquainted. What is Crouslé going to decide?

M. Simon does not know the extended *ego*; he only knows my conclusions vaguely. I write to him from time to time. Do not give him my theses. Keep them and return them to me in a fortnight's time.

Poor M. Vacherot! he is stranded!!

Love and renewed thanks.

To Mademoiselle Sophie Taine.

August 10, 1852.

I shall see the world again for an instant, and bring you a whiff of Paris air. Most amusing comedies take place in the world: a student of the School of Athens started digging a hole at the foot of a hill, and found two or three old cellars, several dirty stones on which three or four illegible letters can be traced with strong magnifying glasses, plus a fragment of rotten wall. Immediately trumpets, drums and cymbals sound; the *Journal de l'Instruction Publique*, the *Académie des Inscriptions*, the *Moniteur* praise to the skies our young Hellenist, the patient investigator of old irons and antique broken crocks, and the King of Greece honours with some order or other our happy Universitarian mole. The *Chartreuse de Parme* (Stendhal) gives me the reason for that. There is Science and Science; the dangerous, important, scientific science which is sent to the bottom of a well, transported to Cayenne or relegated to an attic in the St. Jacques quarter,

and the inoffensive, virtuous, licensed Science, despised in private but lauded in public, and which gives to princes, in President Hénault's historical abstracts, the name of Protectors of Letters, etc. "Clever men agree between themselves that they know the Mexican language and can teach it, and Ernest IV. gives a pension of 1,000 fr. and his father's Cross to Father Rari who has restored seventeen verses of a Greek dithyrambic."

Our Ernest IV. has discharged M. Vacherot and suppressed his salary. Here is a truer axiom than those of geometers: The only way to succeed in this world is to be undeserving of success. Fortunately, one can do without that; books and dead men are wittier than the living, one can read and work in one's room with delightful happiness, and after that one can go and join you in the Ardennes.

My defunct thesis has been gathered in Paris by the pious hands of my friends, which friends have sent me a pæan of praise, telling me that it was a book, and should be printed. I shall abstain from doing so for ten years; I shall first wait till there are a dozen like it on my desk, the total of which will make a respectable volume. I have some lead in my pouch, but I shall not scatter it grain by grain; I am amassing enough to make a good bursting charge, which I shall hope to explode in the face of official truth. Meanwhile

The care of my flock absorb my whole being,

as our grandmothers used to sing;

And the wicked's infectious touch altereth not my innocence.

What dirt, what meanness I have seen these last two

years! it would be distressing if it were not ridiculous. I laugh at it, therefore, and my sole care is for Vouziers.

Sail away, O ship,
Bearing my love!

That is what I repeat to myself. Is it sailing? M. le Professeur, as you see, has an ornamental stock of sacred and lyrical quotations, like a Pont-Neuf virtuoso.

Who knows? perhaps my destiny will plant me there some day! As the marble statue of a President of the Republic, or as a blind man with a clarionet, a plate and a dog? Which would be best? An honest man may well hesitate nowadays!

Part IV

RETURN TO PARIS

CHAPTER I

The Theses Supported—Appointment at Besançon—M. Taine applies for Leave—Life in Paris—Course of Lectures at M. Carré-Demailly's School—Zoological and Physiological Studies—Correspondence

A FRESH disappointment awaited the young Professor at the close of the summer of 1852. He could not remain in Poitiers, the Rhetoric class being no longer vacant, and he had asked to be transferred to a town where a Faculty of Sciences was to be found, in order to continue his studies in Physiology. He desired to remain a Professor of Letters, but he had hoped for a post at least the equivalent of his assistantship at Poitiers. The Minister's answer was an appointment to a *sixième* Professorship at the Besançon *lycée*. His services were evidently not wanted. He therefore immediately adopted the plan of life which he had thought of on the morrow of the Coup d'État; he came to Paris, asked for a long leave, and looked for some private lessons to make up the very modest budget which was indispensable to his wants. He wished to part with his freedom as little as possible, and to reserve some time

to write his new theses, and to attend lectures at the School of Medicine. He therefore organized his life in the simplest manner and settled down in a tiny hotel in the Rue Servandoni.

He had definitely settled on La Fontaine's Fables for the subject of his thesis; he merely looked upon this last University competition as upon a tiresome task and provision for his future. All his thoughts and efforts were absorbed by the treatise on *Cognition* which he had begun to write. The work on La Fontaine was practically done, he had got together the elements of it whilst preparing for the Literature, *agrégation*, and his studies for the Philosophy *agrégation* also provided him with materials for his Latin thesis: *De personis Platonicis.*

It was not without regret that he renounced official Professorship; he liked imparting his ideas and explaining his methods to young minds. He was therefore pleased at being offered a regular Lecturership at the Carré-Demailly private school. There he had the great joy of numbering among his pupils the eminent man who later on became his dearest and most intimate friend, M. Émile Boutmy.[1] He was also giving a few private lessons, and succeeded, as he had wished to do, in buying time and freedom of thought at the cost of two hours' work every day.

He gave a great part of his time to scientific studies; he attended at the Sorbonne M. Fano's Physiology lectures, and at the Museum M. de Jussieu's Botany lectures and

[1] M. Boutmy was not a regular pupil of the Carré-Demailly school, but had been attracted by the nascent reputation of the young lecturer, as also another very distinguished student, M. Deville, who died prematurely in 1867.

M. Isidore Geoffroy St. Hilaire's course of Zoological lectures.

He also attended classes on Anatomy and Physiology at the School of Medicine, and assiduously frequented the Salpètrière Clinic, the Physician in Chief being Dr. Baillarger, who was a relation of his. These studies were continued for several years; they formed a solid foundation for his psychological works, and may be considered as the starting point of the philosophical evolution which, in 1867–9, resulted in his *Theory of the Intelligence.*

To Édouard de Suckau.

October 15, 1852.

I saw M. de Suckau two days after my latest mishap[1] and I thought he would keep you informed. That is why I did not answer you sooner. I have obtained leave, and I have just been round my whole circle of acquaintances trying to find some private teaching. I have found nothing yet, and I am waiting, rather hopelessly, wondering whether I did well to give way to an impulse of wounded pride and to the advice of all my friends. Necessity is a hard mistress, and, when it is a question of earning one's bread, it is ridiculous to heed pin-pricks in one's vanity. I was too happy at Bourbon and at the École; I ought to have remembered that I am nothing, that I have a right to nothing, that it is doing me a favour to employ me, that it is a blessing to live at the price of twenty-five hours a week, and that, if it is a mean thing to teach *sixième* little boys, it is meaner still to sweep crossings or to cobble shoes.

[1] The Besançon appointment.

I shall know in two months' time whether I did well. I will first write out my work on *Cognition*, then do my theses, and at the same time attend some Anatomy lectures. The will is not lacking, I do not think I shall ever find it so. but perhaps a spring is broken in my moral machine—the spring of Hope. I am beginning to see Life as it is, old fellow, and to understand what it costs to introduce oneself into the world or to introduce an idea into it; I judge of the second by the first; and my reflections are destroying in me the militant *ego*. I only look upon study now as a sort of opium, useful in dressing the wounds of pride, killing *ennui* and exhausting the superabundant activity of the brain. I shall take more of the drug than ever, for I want it. I live in a world of sad reflections when I do not live in a world of serious thoughts; I need to gather round me a cloud of abstract ideas to veil from my sight my own smallness and insignificance.

Gréard has a *seconde* Professorship at Metz; he deserved it, for he was first on the list at the leaving examinations. Poor Dupré is only *troisième* class assistant in a Communal College and very distressed. Prévost works in the morning, runs about in the afternoon, and aspires to become a librarian somewhere or other.

M. Vacherot has two pupils boarding at his house.

I am going to stay at the Hotel Servandoni, Rue Servandoni, until my lessons—if I find any—call me elsewhere. I hope I shall see you often now that you are only six hours from Paris.[1]

Good-bye, my dear old chum; though half drowned,

[1] E. de Suckau had just been appointed Professor of Philosophy at the Bourges *lycée*.

I am glad to see my friends afloat, and I wish them a fair wind and a calm sea.

To the same.

November 28, 1852.

MY DEAR ED.,—I have a cold and I cannot light my fire. And, crushed under those two misfortunes, my great soul knoweth not what to say to you. Never mind, I will write anything that comes into my head. I will read your letter over to return to the consciousness of the sublunary world.

To begin with, old fellow, I conclude from your recital that I did well in avoiding Besançon. If you, illustrious Professor of Logic, experience such disgust, what would it have been for me, a humble *sixième* house dog? I bristle with horror at the thought of ten classes a week, amongst ten grumbling, grunting, stamping children. I was not born a tamer of wild beasts, and, with the Lord's permission, I never shall be one.

But the life I have adopted instead is not worth much. I have six lessons a week, total 33 fr., just enough to live—if it lasts—when added to my poor resources;[1] and everything is dearer in Paris. And one must dress, and go out after pupils; a lot of time is wasted and very little money earned.

There is a lot of going out for nothing in Paris, and a country town gives one more chance of quiet thought; if only I could have had a *troisième* class in Bourges I would have taken it with great pleasure. Do not come down from your perch; every year will make you go up

[1] M. Taine had about 1,200 fr. a year as his share of his father's estates.

one rung. You progress without moving, through the sheer motion of things. There one sticks in the same place, and all one's efforts result merely in keeping one from starvation.

I attend an Anatomy course and one on Physiology at the Museum of the School of Medicine. That population of students and Professors is curious and their dissections interesting. Butchers and scientists, what devotion is theirs to Man and what contempt! On the first day, I, with my spiritualistic education, was absolutely dumbfounded. But I had not a moment of disgust. Those laws, which repeat the same organs, in the same places, in all bodies, are magnificent. The muscles of a young woman's back are now being dissected before us. It is a terrible and grandiose thought, that of Nature, the eternal somnambulist. What prodigality in her genius, and how dead it all is! Ah, my poor Cartesians!!

I profit by listening to their methods, but it is pure practice. There is not a philosopher amongst them; all sceptical sawbones.

It will give you an idea of my rare leisure to hear that I have not yet had time to read Esquirol.[1] My friends at the operating theatre tell me that he is behind the times, that in fact nobody knows anything about the subject, and that nowadays every one adjourns generalities in favour of monographs.

I have written seventy pages of my La Fontaine. I had written out a bit of my Theory of the Intelligence, but fatigue caused me to put the break on. My thesis is not much easier. I find it hard to write in literary French,

[1] Probably the *Treatise on Mental Diseases.*

I who have lived for three years amongst Conclusions and am withered up by Abstraction, and it terrifies me. It is very pretty, though; I have just made out a gallery of the men of La Fontaine's time, comparing him to La Bruyère and St. Simon; it is a pleasure to see so much wit in a painter; one could write a volume about him. And I must clothe myself in a literary skin, I must have a diploma to leave this miserable condition of a private teacher. When I am a Doctor I might compete for the prize which the Academy is offering for a literary and historical criticism of Livy. But all this is uncertain; what is real is that I was feverish yesterday and that to-day my head aches and my feet are cold.

My mother has just returned from staying with her brothers, and we have vainly been looking for rooms for her all the week. I have seen your father once or twice; he passionately desires that you should stick to your philosophical and Universitarian niche. Why, my dear fellow, we all understand that a profession vilifies us by necessitating toadyism and stupefies us by its monotony. But we all must have one, and the important thing is that it should leave us some moments of leisure during which we can become men again. Do you think it is amusing to correct exercises as I have to do or to analyse hideous books for people who buy for money the glory of appearing to have read them?

I love to see Paris in the evening, luminous, moving, infinite; it gives food for thought and I did not have that in Poitiers. But I miss the École. I have no opportunities of conversation, and we shall never find again the movement of ideas in which we were brought up. What

state is it in now? Silence is compulsory at meals, in the studies, in the sleeping rooms, in the passages leading to the lecture-halls; exercises are accumulated to prevent students from having time to read; three-quarters of the literary books are refused. My poor Ed., let us embrace each other and say, "Lord save us, for we perish!"

To his Mother.[1]

JUVISY, *December* 18, 1852.

I have seen Madame About. About wants to leave Athens and the University. He is sick of the shop and thinks of going abroad. Blows follow blows. The two *seconde* professors at Bourbon, who had been there for twenty years, have just been suspended. One of them, M. Hubert, the simplest and best of men, who spent his life in collecting Latin poems, is penniless on the street, with his family. It appears that he had risked a few words as to the gratuitous lectures with which professors have been surcharged.

My St. Louis pupil is going up to-morrow for his *baccalauréat*; I think he will fail. If he takes more lessons I shall soon hear of it; if not I shall again start pupil hunting in Paris. I meet all sorts of people; yesterday, for instance, M. Dubois,[2] who stood on the pavement talking to me for three quarters of an hour, and who was most kind. I will go and see M. Petitjean.[3]

My French rough copy is about finished. I will polish

[1] Mme. Taine had gone back to the Ardennes after a short stay in Paris.

[2] Formerly Director of the École Normale.

[3] M. Petitjean was brother-in-law to M. Adolphe Bezanson.

it and smarten it up for its "coming out." Please God and the Faculty it may not break its nose like its elder brother. The Mignet[1] business has fallen through, M. Mignet had already engaged some one else. Besides, it meant two hours a day and only sixty-five francs a month.

My medical studies amuse me; I like this great, living Parisian world; my health keeps good and it is all much better than the blotting paper balls and baked apples with which my Besançon pupils would have pelted me.

Sophie speaks of two possible buyers for the house; think well before deciding to come here; my future is too uncertain to regulate yours. At Juvisy I am most affectionately received.[2] We are just going out; it is a lovely morning; if it were not for the cold I would advise Virginie to draw winter landscapes. The bare trees are so graceful and delicate in their form, and the open horizon so charming under the mist, that the country is as beautiful as in the spring.

To the same.

December. 28, 1852.

A Happy New Year, dear Mother. . . . I really do not know what to choose as a good elder brother; yet, let the Italian scholars deign to accept the Manzoni which they seemed to wish for. They will read it together. I am packing it with two or three novels for you to read during the long winter evenings. They are details of

[1] There had been some question of his being appointed private secretary to M. Mignet.

[2] By M. Alexandre Bezanson and his wife.

habits and passions, in good and simple style, a rare thing which it always is a pleasure to find.

I nearly had some work from M. Augustin Thierry; the affair is not hopeless, but postponed. Libert and his employer, M. Maury, have promised to help me in that direction if the occasion should arise again. My future Bachelor came to grief over a translation, as I had foreseen. He will probably take more lessons; in any case, and as a precaution, I am looking for another pupil. I enjoy my lessons at Madame D.'s. It is a pleasure to read fine things aloud and to invent ideas as I am speaking. M. N., whom I have seen, much approves of my staying here and working for a Doctor's degree and for the Academy. "You are in Paris, do not leave it again"; that was his phrase, word for word. He is still the man who said to me when I was in Rhetoric: "You are making the first step, now aim at a seat in the Academy." It is all very well, but it is not enough to wish in order to get! Many wish for a seat and remain standing!

Do not trouble yourself in the least on my account; I am in good health and not bored; I am much happier than at Poitiers and at Nevers, I do not feel around me any gossiping slandering, interfering or surveillance; I am not surrounded by forty imbeciles who rebel on the strength of their numbers, and who make their ignorance an excuse for their idleness. The School of Medicine is delightful, its museum and preparations charm me, and, when my head aches, there is the Luxembourg at my very door, which quite equals the wood of Un An[1] or any other country spot. I have taken up Philosophy again a little,

[1] Near Vouziers.

I read books on Madness and on Sleep in libraries; altogether I live with a free mind and without the leaden skull cap which I had to wear all last year.

I have seen M. Guizot again; his son has promised to come and see me; the acquaintance might ripen into a friendship. I wish it may, less because he is his father's son than because he is himself. I know him to be capable, learned, and strong in character and in mind.

There are no events in my peaceful and monotonous life. I have been to the theatre twice, I heard *Norma* at the Italian opera. Mme. Cruvelli sings and phrases admirably, but she has not the same purity and grandeur in her voice as Madame Alboni, whom Virginie heard. The little Metzu[1] was very pretty, and I should be happy to have Rembrandt's Christ. It is a Christ for the poor, for wretches cowering in their dens, ugly and dirty like them, but full of an infinite sorrow and tenderness.

To Mademoiselle Virginie Taine.

January 14, 1853.

MY DEAR GIRL,—The life one leads here makes letters rare; forgive me and do not be anxious if I miss the proper day.

I have some teaching to do close by, an hour and a half, five days a week, at 100 fr. a month. It is a private house where there are four boarders; M. Libert also teaches there; I am manufacturing a Bachelor, etc. . . . A former Professor is going to open a hot-house for the *baccalauréat* near the School of Medicine next month; he offers

[1] Copied by Mlle. Virginie Taine.

me 100 fr. a month for a class on Logic and Composition. Finally, M. Polonceau, who will perhaps place his son in the school where I go, is asking me to give him three lessons a week. I shall be obliged to refuse work soon; everything is therefore for the best, in the best of worlds. . . . Are you pleased, and do you feel that you know all about me? Imagine what a lot of calls I have had to pay! My legs are still aching. I never have a moment, I am constantly meeting old chums, etc. . . . I had a long talk with my uncle; he reproaches us with being unable to see things as practical people should, and with not knowing how to be happy. Perhaps he is right, but one cannot be happy to order, and, to be so, I have to smother the thought of self in reading and work.

Would you believe it? The most artistically beautiful things I see here are the streets of Paris. Those long streets, when the sun rises through the bluish mist which forms their horizon, are of an extraordinary beauty. I understand the poetry of the old Flemish cities and all the light which the Dutch painters have poured over their markets and shops. Uncle is right when he sees Beauty in everything.

Only, in order to feel it, one must be in a good temper—or a painter like you.

To Mademoiselle Sophie Taine.

January, 1853.

. . . Never has my time been so full; I have not a moment to write to my friends, and yet there are no events in my life. My lessons, medical studies, theses and researches are going their own little way, a very quiet little

way. Would it amuse you to hear that my Bourbon pupils (at the Carré-Demailly boarding-school) are writing French verse for St. Charlemagne's day, that I have just seen the arteries of the brain, and that I have come to the fiftieth page of my Latin thesis on Plato? I went the other day to see the lunatics at the Salpêtrière. M. Baillarger, the Physician-in-chief, is a relation of ours (through the Fournivals). I have called several times on Madame Seillière[1] without ever finding her alone. I dined there on Sunday. I also dined on Tuesday at M. Carré-Demailly's with several Bourbon Professors; he sounds my praises in every key.

Finally, latest news: poor Sarcey is not admitted to the School of Athens. Everybody says that he was one of the first at the examination. But he was unlucky enough, whilst whispering with one of his neighbours, to allude to a ridiculous misadventure which had befallen one of his judges. The very man overheard him and formally opposed his nomination. He is going back to Chaumont in despair, not knowing what to do with himself, on bad terms with his Rector, and furious at the number of classes and lectures he has to take. To give you an idea of the state of things, learn that, last term, the first Professor on Physics at Bourbon had to give notes on 614 students! They are exhausted, overwhelmed, disgusted, and curse the whole thing.

You can imagine that with so many occupations and troubles music gets rather neglected. I do play a little every night, but it is not practising. I cannot even go to the theatre; however, I hope to go to the Ste. Cécile Hall on Sunday if there is a concert. But at bottom I am happy,

[1] A cousin of Mme. Taine's.

much happier than I was last year, because my life has something to feed on and I can act freely. H.M. the Emperor and King is to me exactly as if he did not exist, and, no longer having to consider a Rector and provincial espionage, I am merry and happy.

The teaching I am doing leads me to think that, for your History, you ought to write some reports. For instance, as you write out your old notes. I advise you to make large and very abbreviated tables, with ciphers, alphabetical letters and other modes of classification, and to write in the principal dates and great facts. It will make a sort of frame into which your readings will arrange themselves and fix themselves in your memory. Do you know Italian grammar now? In order to learn it you might take an Italian sentence which you can understand, and as you meet with a noun or a verb decline the one and conjugate the other. It would at the same time be good practice for your memory and for your reasoning.

To his Mother and Sisters.

February 9, 1853.

. . . The mass of occupations I have here absorbs me, and I cannot talk with you as much as I should like. At present I am writing like a cat, my hand is so tired; I have copied out my French thesis and it has taken up half a ream of paper. This horrid scribbling dazzles me, and my head seems full of pages, letters, lines, corrections, etc. . . .

I have undertaken one more lesson. On the average I spend two hours a day at this work, which I do not dislike, and I earn 200 fr. a month; it is as good as a post

in the provinces. As a matter of fact I do not know why I give two hours a day, one hour would be enough for my needs. There is nothing to spend money on, a few theatres and two or three concerts do not cost much; in order to spend money, one would have to go out and spend time, which I cannot afford. I shall be hoarding for no purpose! I should not be happier with dinners at 1.50 fr. instead of 1 fr. It is so indifferent to me that I never even thought of it. The only thing I desire is to be rid of the Doctorate and other Universitarian nonsense, to receive by a decree the cap and other official garments, and to return to Philosophy and Medicine which I force myself to neglect and towards which my heart yearns with desire. Otherwise I have never been so happy. Having no time to reflect on myself, I have no time to indulge in the "blues," or to meditate on the future or on the past. I am very active, action and continual action is what is essential to happiness.

Amongst my pupils, there is a young lady. I make her read *Don Quixote*, Augustin Thierry and Racine's letters to his son. I have commented for her Corneille and Racine, whom you ought to study, and I shall distil for her benefit my thesis on La Fontaine. Dear Sophie, tell me also of your reading and study; tell me whether you have been writing out the tables I told you about.

My dear Ninette, I discover that I have been a fool during the whole of my stay in Paris, I never knew of the Hôtel des Jeûneurs; there are frequent exhibitions of pictures for the sales. I have seen the Duchess of Orleans' gallery, and the pictures of the Romantic Revolution, Decamps' *Battle of the Cimbri*, Scheffer's *Francesca da*

Rimini, Delacroix' *Murder of the Bishop of Liège*, etc. It confirms what the Salon had already taught us. The Moderns are not such painters as the Ancients, but they are greater poets in their paintings, more philosophical, more emotional. The *Battle of the Cimbri* is a hundred times more terrible than that of Salvator (who was already inclining towards Romanticism). Imagine an immense plain stretching as far as the eye can see, with copper or bronze-coloured clouds overhanging it, immense rocks scattered here and there, and, in the foreground, a sort of gorge joining the river. A mass of women and children on barbaric chariots crowd into the gorge; they throw themselves into the river, with dishevelled hair and outstretched arms, separated from their warriors, who are lying in heaps or flying towards the background. In the middle, and just beyond the foreground, the regular lines of the massive Roman legions, pike in hand, in immense numbers. Marius is seen on horseback, with the harsh and terrible features which History ascribes to him, clad in purple, and motioning orders to pursue the horde rolling into the abyss. There, far beyond, in the background, a gigantic crowd is unrolled, a whole nation crushed and fleeing, an obscure and monstrous medley of men, dust and chariots, hurrying away amongst the rocks. A thick, living mass—engulphed and self-destroying, of wild faces and figures, a nation of northern wild beasts, bleeding and howling—all this indistinct, like one body moving and convulsed by its own inward force; three hundred thousand men in four foot square of canvas; I have never seen such a grand thing. I do not know how I succeeded in seeing it at all, there was such a crush before it. The next day, having

gone to see if not His Majesty's wedding, at least the Cathedral, I found a *queue* about three-quarters of a league long: it was one o'clock, and I was told that I might perhaps get in about five o'clock, and that the doors closed at five; I put my hands in my pockets and returned to the Rue des Jeûneurs.

Do take in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* periodically! I have read about twenty pages of it, and from what I have heard I am sure you will enjoy it, my mother especially.

To the same.

February 19, 1853.

I have finished my thesis; M. Petitjean will speak to M. St. Marc Girardin who, I hope, will be my Examiner.

I have been to see a surgical operation. The rest is as usual, the pot is still boiling gently and with very little trouble. Since yesterday I have been coddling myself: I read, I smoke, I rejoice in the idea that my theses are done; but the great trouble is lighting my fire. I have to light it, it is freezing, but it blackens one's fingers; I have to use the bellows, it is such a trouble. . . . I interrupt my letter every five minutes to work with the tongs or bellows. . . . Thanks to the Saints, I think I have succeeded. At the end of my letter I will tell you if I have. . . . But, dearest Virginie, if you wish to talk over Bernardin (de Saint Pierre) what is there to prevent you? Write on a scrap of paper, as you read, all that seems strange to you, and let us chat on paper as we would by our fireside. Poor man, is he then so imbecile? You know him better than I do now. All I know of him is that his Physics and Physiology are bound up in God, and that this bricklaying

and housekeeping God plays rather a flat part in all his explanations. But I am ignorant of his moral ideas, and I know that I found in him many ingenious things and, under the sentimentalism of his time, a good and noble heart. You have, it seems to me, much more to read: Robertson (*History of America*) is very useful; methodical, reasonable, moderate, learned and conscientious, he is neither an artist, a statesman, nor a philosopher, but the rest is excellent. He is indeed Walter Scott's brother, and the Historian of all that Scotch school, which, if it add up all its authors together, cannot produce one half of a Lord Byron.

Gibbon is more sceptical and slightly Frenchified, but he has the same merits. I should also like you to cast your eyes on Froissart and write to me about it all.

I see in your letter the word *insignificant* underlined. Since you ask for my opinion on your epistolary style I will give it you. The best on this subject is to have no opinion to give, because true style in a letter consists in writing what comes into your head without troubling to put it well. As to your own, I would say that it deserves rather the contrary reproach to the underlined word. Sometimes I seem to see a man's hand in it rather than a woman's, and some people might perhaps think it rather too expressive, for it is an understood thing that a girl should have retiring manners and a soul of satin. It is probably that somewhat hasty frankness and originality of language which struck your uncle and brought upon you the favourable judgment and slight strictures which you mention. You thought you had carefully disguised yourself, my poor girl, but, believe me, it is impossible always

to do so. A phrase is a revelation. Here is one from your letter, "You must force yourself to be amused; it is a labour like any other. One should try and remain young as long as possible." Three or four such words differ from the usual tone of girls of your age. But never mind; the thing is to be as little stupid, tiresome and bored as possible. We must consider public opinion, but not torture ourselves on account of it.

My fire is burning. Glory and victory!

To his Mother.

March 17, 1853.

My Latin thesis has been returned to me with permission to print it. M. Saint-Marc Girardin has the French one, and promises to let me know about it before the end of the month.

There is nothing interesting to tell you; I am peacefully giving my lessons. I go to the libraries, I work at home in the evenings, I sometimes feel bored when my head aches. I have been five or six times to the theatre in six months; everything is therefore passable if not good. Sometimes I see the future in dark colours, but a cup of coffee or a small medical or philosophical discovery brightens me up again. On the whole I am happier than last year.

In fact, *ennui* is the great evil in life; when it is exchanged for serious occupation, without sorrows, everything is gained. Perhaps, even if one has a definite talent, it is a mistake to come out of the common rut; one's fireside

is the most comfortable place; and if I had before me a passable University post, even in a country town, I should like it better than my knight-errant sort of life. This will be the happiest, though, if you come to live here. Who can tell the future? and what strange changes may take place! I am no longer counting on my own plans. Chance does more than calculation, and if I succeed some day, it may be because I have left the University.

I shall probably go next week to a magnetism séance.[1] Last night, at an at home at Madame Seillière's, we amused ourselves for two hours in *not* turning tables and hats; my scepticism spoilt all the experiments.

To Édouard de Suckau.

April 11, 1853.

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—What are you doing? I have your trouble[2] on my mind; have you begun studying something in order to forget it? My poor old chum, we are the two vols. of one work; I had this much more trouble than you, that I had been unfortunate enough to write a Latin thesis in vain, and I advise you to seek consolation in a literary thesis, as I have done. And even there, I have had worry upon worry. M. Saint-Marc Girardin has made me leave out the comparison between Louis XIV. and the *Amorous Lion*, La Fontaine's little love stories, etc. . . . He tolerates, but only tolerates, the philosophical part.

[1] At Alexis'.

[2] E. de Suckau had had to give up the philosophical thesis he had prepared on *Liberty*.

Still he is a polished and witty gentleman, and there is some pleasure in being scratched by him ; but M. Le Clerc ! ! His advice is contrary to that of M. Saint-Marc Girardin. " The chapter on portraits is in too frivolous a tone ; suppress one half of your quotations, etc. . . . The word *grivois* is not French (!) ; take care not to scandalize the young ladies and children who read La Fontaine, etc. . . ." I try to correct, and spoil everything. The French copy has not been returned to me yet, I do not know when I can get it printed, and in the meanwhile I am larded with pin-pricks. And one has to be modest, humble, docile, obsequious, flattering when in one's heart one is sending people to the devil. Pray for me, as I pray for you.

Dear Ed., we must steep ourselves in our science, and look out of the window as little as possible. I read Gall and I ponder on characters. What are their causes, and the causes of passions ? Spinoza has shown that they were the ideas ; then why have certain people a predisposition to entertain one series of ideas exclusively ? For instance, why does the miser consider his gain in everything and a kind man think of the happiness of others, etc. ? Should we believe in types ? What do our analyses tell us thereon ? What do you yourself say ? I hardly have time to work it out, the hours pass too quickly ! My life —our life, I think—is made up of languor and *ennui*, and sudden gusts of passion and will. Happy man, you will see the first smiles of the spring, whilst I shall enjoy the hot stones and dusty street of our beloved Paris. Think over my request and try to find four days during the holidays to come with me and bask in the sun like lizards at Fontainebleau.

Did you ascertain whether the lady, your hostess, was really dressing at the time mentioned by Alexis?[1]

I have decided for Livy. I have begun reading him to-day; I shall have to read over a series of German horrors and blind myself with their dusty pedantism. Since I am an *outlaw* I must accept the benefits of my profession! Livy is not very amusing, he is a phrase-monger who seeks neither for the Truth nor the Life, but who is a moralist and an orator. I shall have to praise him more than he deserves. Ever more constraint!! What a divine saying this is: "Words were given to Man to conceal his thoughts!"

And then one is looked upon as a window-breaker. M. Le Clerc gave me to understand that I was considered as a rebel, and his Academical laughter honoured me by exerting itself over my adventures. I am negotiating for permission to dedicate my thesis to M. Vacherot. One must have a licence to show gratitude! The devil take life! long live one's friends. Write to me, dear Ed., and a warm handshake.

To the same.

April 25, 1853.

MY DEAR ÉDOUARD,—Here is, it seems to me, a fine subject for a thesis, and a philosophical one. One would first have to ask the Faculty to be allowed to treat it in a historical manner.

[1] Alexis was a celebrated somnambulist. M. de Suckau, in his answer, states that the fact above mentioned is correct.

Aristotle's Physic.

The book has not been translated into French.[1] Nobody has touched it, save a few words in Ravaisson. I read it at the École ; it is magnificent ; it is a simple generalization of Experience with the interpretation of generalizations. A simple exposition, tending to make it clearer. It is a service to render to science, with no danger for these gentlemen.

If you like the idea, write to me and I will speak to them about it.

It will be more amusing than an insipid analysis of some unknown imbecile of the Middle Ages or a thesis on Florian. And, especially, it is *new.*

My book is being printed. Endless trouble, calls on M. Le Clerc, corrections, etc. . . . At last, I hope, I am nearing the port. To-morrow I am expecting the first proofs. I am so burdened with occupations that I do not know whether I shall have time to write you these three pages. My mother is still in Paris, I have several times gone down with her to Poissy, I am an intermediary in a delicate and important affair ;[2] I spend my evenings with her ; the rest of the time is taken up by lessons and classes.

I have been informed indirectly that I was not to dedicate my thesis to M. Vacherot ; I will therefore dedicate it to no one, and I shall present it to him in person, since it is impossible otherwise. I have learnt many things in my conversations with M. Le Clerc. I am considered in the

[1] M. Barthélemy Saint Hilaire's translation only appeared in 1862

[2] His elder sister's marriage.

University as "an ungovernable spirit who will go to perdition in spite of any good advice." Indeed I have the most monstrous reputation possible. Some one in high station, whose name I was not told, was even surprised that I should have been sent to a *sixième* at Besançon; he thought it was in a Communal School. So that I shall certainly remain in Paris next year. It all comes from the École; besides the notes which were read to us, there were some secret notes, and, I fear, punishment for our conversations. My good Ed., your gentleness saved you; you may take a few liberties now without giving umbrage. As to me, however harmless I may be now, prejudice is acquired, and I am proscribed. Freedom and the mountains!

Edmond is leaving Greece in May; he will spend three months at Rome and return here in November. He says that Athens is a little country town with bigots and gossips, and he is already sick of it. We will run our chances together.

I am finishing Gall; I assure you that it stirs up a great many ideas. It is the negation of Spinoza's theory on Passions. But I am only philosophizing by fits and starts, on the way to my lessons. You psychologize peacefully ensconced in the leisure of Professorship.

Go ahead, dear old man, and the devil take the Inquisitors who have burnt us both. We shall be resuscitated, I dare swear. For the present let us shake hands affectionately in our common grave.

RETURN TO PARIS

To the same.

May 31, 1853.

DEAR ED.,—I am a Doctor. Six hours' discussion, an attack from the Catholic Wallon on the Paganism of my Latin thesis. Nobody spoke of the Pantheism of the French one. They heckled me a good deal about the plan, and especially on the men's characters, which I was accused of constructing arbitrarily. M. Garnier much attacked the Being, the action, the unity, the variety, etc., and alluded to your thesis. I retired from my ground on Philosophy; I was grave as a cat drinking vinegar, to that extent that M. Vacherot thinks that I did not carry the ensign of Philosophy high enough or frankly enough. . . . Otherwise, every thing was quite correct, and I am through. Now for calls of thanks. I am doing my Livy, etc. . . .

The more I think of it, and the more I remember Wallon and the other Catholics at the Sorbonne, the more I fear that you may get drowned in the sources of the Nile. Read Marcus Aurelius again, I beg of you, and take the Academy prize for Morality. You have a hundred chances, for nobody goes in for it, and the crowned books are a Psychology, a History of Literature, a Treatise on Rodin, etc. You will kill two birds with one stone.

Prévost assisted me in the supreme passage. The École had been authorized to come. All my friends embellished the ceremony. Dear Ed., I regretted the necessity for the class at Bourges as much as you did. Really, dear old fellow, you would have had a dreadful time. How disgusting to watch pin-pricks for six hours! There was no means of raising the level of the discussion; I might have done so with M. Havet, but it was too dangerous.

Well, I have passed the Caudine Forks. Your turn now, and quickly! It will bring you back to Paris or send you to a Faculty. As for me I remain an outlaw.

To his Mother.

May 31, 1853.

DEAR MOTHER,—I am a Doctor, after six hours' discussion, unanimously. My friends are pleased with my thesis, and those gentlemen's criticisms were honeyed with praise. My uncle[1] was there, and several of my old masters. I must now pay calls of thanks, etc. The printing cost 577 fr., I may sell about 100 fr. worth,[2] and I am earning enough money at present.

This is the last thorn out of my foot. Now I must have an Academy prize; I am working hard at it. I hope to finish by the holidays, and then I shall vigorously push on my big philosophical book, which I have temporarily abandoned. My life is very busy with the lessons I am giving, the lectures I am attending, my calls, etc. . . . It is an excellent thing, as it prevents me from being bored. But it is a pity that I shall only have a few days to spend with you next month when the great day comes.[3]

To M. Hatzfeldt.

June 10, 1853.

How is Shakespeare, and what do you think of the Poitevins?[4] You must begin to taste provincial life; what

[1] M. Adolphe Bezanson.

[2] The whole edition was bought up in a few weeks.

[3] Mlle. Virginie Taine's wedding with Dr. Hippolyte Letorsay.

[4] M. Hatzfeldt had been appointed Professor of Foreign Literature at the Faculty of Poitiers.

do you think of it? I only know one resource in Poitiers, which is the Baths. Let me have two lines, I beg of you, to tell me how you like your new life and also that you have not forgotten me.

I have made the leap and am now a Doctor. You promised me your criticism and advice; please do not spare me either the one or the other. Be a faithful debtor as I am an exacting creditor.

You will see in the two books a literary method which I have been teaching for a long time, and traces of a philosophy which differs from yours; but you will excuse it, I hope, when you meet reminiscences of your lectures everywhere.

I have passed through many hands, but my first master has left his mark in my thoughts and writings.

This is but a poor compliment to pay you, when I have to thank you for so many things, and amongst others for the lesson you have procured for me. It is useful if not amusing, and Grammar boils the pot of Philosophy. I hope that you are at least happier than I am, you teach the philosophy of Literature and I correct Greek exercises.

Believe, my dear Sir, in the sincere affection of your devoted, etc.

To M. F. Guizot.

SIR,—I am told at the Sorbonne that a Doctor has a right to send his thesis to an Honorary Professor of the Faculty; but I have other reasons for asking you to accept mine. Cornelis,[1] has no doubt told you what you have done for

[1] Cornelis de Witt, M. Guizot's son-in-law.

me and for many young men, confined in a College and groping amongst Latin exercises, Greek grammars, chronological tables and Historical Geneàlogies. By means of your books we saw light for the first time, and, thanks to you, we entered the moral world guided by an exact scientific method. The book I offer to you is an effort towards those ideas and an attempt at this method, perhaps an unfortunate attempt, but one which testifies, I hope, to a desire to think. You encouraged this desire when you so kindly held out your hand to me at the time of my sad début in the University. Believe, sir, that I remember both this service and the other, and that I express feelings of a long standing when I tell you of the respect and gratitude with which I remain your obedient servant.

Answer from M. Guizot.

VAL RICHER, *June* 14, 1853.

I wished to read you before answering your letter, Sir, and I have read your French thesis with great and genuine pleasure. It is excellent literature, neither commonplace nor eccentric; ideas abound and are presented under a living and agreable form. You have made use of Philosophy a great deal; it is obviously your favourite source. La Fontaine had not gone into it as deeply as you, and I was much struck as I read, with the extreme difference between your starting-point and point of view and those of your author. Your merit is all the greater in showing yourself such an intelligent interpreter. I hear that the discussion on your thesis was worthy of the writing of it; many congratulations. I am much touched with

the sentiments expressed in your letter, and I beg you to believe in my own. GUIZOT.

P.S.—I shall read your Latin thesis.

To his Mother.

June, 1853.

I am overwhelmed with calls to pay, etc., added to many lessons, and the necessity of going to libraries for my Livy, to thank my examiners, my friends, professors, etc., who were present at my thesis. I have written a multitude of letters to M. Guizot, etc. . . . One of my judges,[1] who knows Béranger very well, asked me for my thesis for him; I accompanied it with a letter, of which I enclose a copy to give you an idea of my progress in the serpentine style. There will probably be a line about me in the *Débats*, and I think I shall have an article on Thursday in the two newspapers of the *Instruction Publique*.

My book will bring me the acquaintance of a lot of personalities; I had to offer a copy to MM. Cousin and Villemain. Every one gives me hope for the future. If I get the prize for Livy my disgrace will have been fruitful. So all is going well. Here is my epistle to Béranger:—

June, 1853.

SIR,—It is indeed bold in a student from the Latin Quarter to offer La Fontaine to Béranger. But M. Arnould encourages me to do so, and tells me that a great kinsman is always well received, whatever the hand which presents him. Allow me, therefore, to bring you one of your ancestors. Though a poet, he was natural, in the days of Boileau and pomposity.

[1] M. Arnould.

He founded a style that no one dare touch after him; he praised Freedom on every occasion, and it was not his fault that he did not suffer for it. You see, Sir, that he is of your family. I philosophized about him, perhaps at his expense, and by the side of his delightful wit my syllogisms bear a very barbaric aspect, but in whom could they find more indulgence than in him whose refrains are theories, and who gave the wings of song to Philosophy?

Béranger's Answer.

June 21, 1853.

I had not imagined, Sir, that a thesis could be so diverting and afford so much interest to ignoramuses of my description. I have changed my mind since reading the copy of yours which you have had the kindness to send me through my friend M. Arnould. Not only, Sir, have you changed my opinion concerning theses, but even that which I had formed respecting those gentlemen who are your judges. Those glories of Pedagogy appeared to me like great phantoms, eternally grave, who imposed fines upon each other if a smile hovered on their lips. Such is ignorance! I speak of my own, of course, What fines you must have exposed them to pay, Sir, when putting before them, with so much real Science and such ingenious wit, all the beauties of that most perfect of our poets!

You have written a fine work in that language of ours which our Academicians cannot always rightly use; in general, they prefer narrowing it down to extending it; there always is enough room for their ideas.

Your work is all the more deserving, and I am the more proud that you deigned to think of me in the distribution of your copies. Receive my thanks for it; I owe to you a commentary on my Breviary.

Accept, Sir, the assurance of my very cordial consideration.

Your devoted servant,

BÉRANGER.

To Édouard de Suckau.

June 18, 1853.

MY DEAR ED.,—I write a line in haste; I am off to the Ardennes in a few days, and I must do some calls and shopping to-day, which will keep me all the afternoon under the Parisian sun.

I am quite of your opinion as to writing a simple Historical exposition, without dogmatical judgment. But I do not advise you to write an exposition of Stoic Morality in general, and not even of that which is common to Arrianus, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius because:

1. It has been done already (Ravaisson, Vacherot, etc.).

2. It is very philosophical, very dangerous; they will ask you for your judgment about it.

3. It will not be amusing enough. It is absolutely necessary nowadays to put on a literary garb.

My advice to you is to write a study *à la* Sainte Beuve (with philosophy and Edwardism, of course) on Marcus Aurelius himself, on the individual. There are but two pleasant kinds of writing, my dear fellow: on the one hand, monograph studies of character, of life, details of the soul, things of Art; and on the other, exalted Philosophy, gene-

ralities whose arms are as wide as the world. The things between these two lack grandeur or interest. You can make of Marcus Aurelius a charming book, which will be read, which will produce honest men, pagans (the same thing!) and philosophers (the same thing again). You will please men of the world and historians, and you may get an Academy prize. An exposition of Stoic morality in general, even with characters transcribed from Arrianus will only please rats in their garrets, like myself. Those characters are, like La Bruyère's, moral satires, under the shape of portraits too general to be true and living. Marcus Aurelius, half discouraged, sad, sceptical, writing in his tent among the Quades, by a river in Germania, or amidst Roman orgies, feeling the brokenness of everything, with Commodus for his son, the hog Verus for a brother, a prostitute for his wife, the traitor Avidius Cassius for his friend, is a Pagan Jesus Christ. Add as precedents a bit of introduction on Thraseas, Helvidius, and at the end the Jurisconsults and Julian. You are entitled to treat all this briefly and with emotion, and to preach the Word without appearing to be dogmatical, etc.

It seems that you work as Cæsar fought. Earn some money; next year we will dissect together both the moral and the physical man. I am reading Dezobry to get some local colour for my Academy essay. I am going to tackle Macchiavelli.

You will bring me your prize-giving speech. I advise you to make it witty; it is all that you can do, and that sort of currency will always be accepted in France.

I can think of no more theses. Albert writes to ask me for one, and I have not yet answered.

Appendices

Appendix I

PHILOSOPHY NOTES

(*August*, 1849)

"What we are doing here is nothing more or less than a Metaphysical geometry.

First, we consider the laws of Thought. We then proceed to state certain concepts of Thought. Putting those laws and those concepts together, we point out the deductions which necessarily follow. For the laws of Thought are no other than the general and necessary modes of action of Thought. Knowing, therefore, how Thought acts, and supposing that it does act, if we apply this determinate action to the above-mentioned concepts, we shall know what Thought will necessarily draw therefrom.

Our work, therefore, reduces itself to this: supposing the existence of a Thought, or acting Reason, to determine what will be the different affirmations that it will successively state. These affirmations are what are called Absolute Truths.

It will be seen that no part is here given to experiment. We remain exclusively in the regions of Pure Reason. We take, not an individual reason, but ideal Reason in itself. We do not start from a determinate and particular fact. We state but the different affirmations and the different concepts of this ideal Reason, which follow from its nature. So does the Geometrician who states the ideal Extension and some ideal figures, and then shows the consequences of those ideal concepts. We will not move a single step from the region of ideas.

Note that we also find those laws of Reason *a priori*. For we draw them from the concept of Thought considered in itself. In other words, we say that to conceive Thought is to conceive that it has such and such laws, i.e. such and such modes of action. Reason, conceiving itself, gives us its own laws.

It is therefore not an *Ego* who is writing this work, it is Thought.

It ensues from the foregoing that all the truths which we shall state here will be not only truths in fact, but necessary truths, and that the existences which we will affirm not only exist, but also cannot but exist.

For that which Reason cannot but conceive is called a necessary thing.[1]

PART I

AXIOM : *For Reason, to act is to affirm, in other words, to posit.*

Observation : When I speak of Reason and its acts, I do not mean those obscure and incomplete conceptions which are in the mind of the greater number of men. I mean clear and complete ideas. So that though the vulgar may deny my axiom, all philosophers will admit it.

Propositions.[2]

1. Reason, in its first act, posits the existence of something.
2. That something is Substance.
3. Reason conceives Substance as being constituted by an infinity of attributes.
4. Reason cannot conceive two things absolutely identical.
5. Substance manifests itself by a number of manifestations

[1] Note, November 1850: "This is pure Idealism; I had not yet made a distinction between *perceiving* and *conceiving*."

[2] Only the propositions can be stated here. They are followed by demonstrations, observations, corollaries, scholiæ, etc.; the whole would fill a volume. Propositions 13 and 14, the shortest of them, are given here as a specimen of the work.

as great as the law of co-existences admits of; in other words, in as great a number of manifestations as there are diverse and distinguishable manifestations to be conceived in it.

6. There is but one Substance.

7. Acts are no other than the attributes themselves, posited as existing, either in totality or in parts.

8. Nothing exists, except the Substance already posited, its attributes, and its acts.

9. Nothing exists (except Substance) which is not conceived as existing in the Substance.

10. Reason can conceive in Substance but two diverse, or distinguishable, manifestations only. Those two manifestations are:

God, or the Substance, insomuch as it manifests itself by an immediate act;

The World, or the Substance, insomuch as it passes through an infinite series of finite and progressive acts in order to reach an adequate act, i.e. an act which expresses its essence completely.

11. God and the World exist.

12. Everything has a cause, save the Substance and its attributes.

13. God is anterior in nature to the World, in other words He is logically conceived before the World.

14. God is not the cause of the World.

15. Everything that is conceived is posited.

16. The series of the acts of the World contain the totality of all the distinct and subordinate acts which can be conceived.

17. (*This proposition is missing, having been scratched out.*)

18. Every determinate act is *one*.

19. Every *one* act is determinate.

20. The indeterminate act exists.

21. The indeterminate act is *non-one* or divisible.

22. This act is unlimited or infinite in its kind.

23. Each term contains the preceding one, and is but that

term itself which has become more adequate. In other words, all posited acts subsist and develop at the same time.

24. The indeterminate and extended act becomes determinate and one.

25. The determinate and *one* act is no other than the indeterminate and extended act which has become one and determinate.

PART II

Of Thought

Axiom: *Thought is conceived by itself.*

1. Thought is an attribute of the Substance.

2. Thought is infinite, in other words, it has for its object the totality of existing things.

3. An act which is determinate in the order of Thought, in other words, clear and determinate Thought, exists.

4. This Thought, amongst other distinct objects, has Thought for its object.

5. This Thought is no other than the indeterminate and extended act which has become one and thinking.

Proposition 13.

God is anterior in nature to the World, in other words He is logically conceived before the World.

Demonstration: God being the immediate act of the Substance has no other cause than the Substance itself. On the contrary, the finite acts through which the world passes have not the cause of their limitation in the Substance, but (*Prop.* 4) in the necessity of a differential means. This differential means (*Prop.* 10) has the effect of rendering the World distinct from the immediate manifestation. The concept of the World therefore implies the concept of the immediate Manifestation or God.

Scholia: The finite acts of the World, having a cause (*Prop.* 12), and not having it in the Substance which posits

the full and immediate act, have it in the anterior existence of God, which implies them as differential means.

Observation: Note that we do not mean by this that God is the cause of the World, for we are about to prove the contrary. The cause of the finite acts of the World is the Substance, insomuch as it is considered as having already produced God. Its power of production, modified by that first production, causes the World. The World is contained in power within the Substance, not in the Substance considered purely and simply, but in the Substance considered as having already produced God.

Proposition 14.

God is not the cause of the World.

Demonstration: In effect He is not of the Essence of the World. For this Essence is the very Substance which is the first concept of Reason (*Prop.* 2), and which consequently has no cause (*Def.* 4 and *Prop.* 12). He is not the cause of the act of the World. For (*Def.* 3) this act is but the existence itself of that Essence. It is that Essence which is the cause of the World. In truth, it is that Essence, no longer simply posited, but posited as having already produced God (*Prop.* 13). But, outside the Essence of the act, there is nothing (*Prop.* 8). Therefore, God is the cause of nothing in the World.

Corollary: It is generally demonstrated in the same way that nothing in an act produces another thing, but that the Cause of all acts, whatever they are, is the absolute Essence, considered as having produced the term immediately preceding it.

November, 1849–*March*, 1850.

IDEA OF SCIENCE.

Definition: The true or perfect idea is that which agrees with its object.

Proposition: Perfect Science is that which reproduces exactly in its concepts the nature and order of things.

The first proposition of Science has the Substance for its object . . .

1st Definition: By Substance, I mean that which is conceived by itself as existing in itself

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2nd Definition: By a thing necessarily existing I mean a thing which cannot be conceived as non-existing.

Proposition: Substance exists necessarily.

1st Proposition: There is a determinate, existing Substance.

Observation: Anterior demonstrations are imperfect; the first proposition should not posit the existence of the Substance, but of the Being. I mean by Being that which is. The Being, or that which is, exists."

The work is continued by a series of demonstrations on the Absolute, the existence of the Absolute Being, proofs of this existence, demonstrations of Logic, etc.

This is but a very short extract of those metaphysical writings. It is but one moment of M. Taine's thought, but it is the first moment, his first personal and prolonged effort. It is the spontaneous work of a constructive mind, which at once starts on the building of a theory of things with the materials, such as they are, which it possesses. Those materials (Substance, Attributes, Cause, Infinite, etc.) are those provided for him by the École teaching, and we have seen by what analysis he dissolves them later on, in their elements, in explaining their psychological genesis. In any case, it was interesting to show by this sample the natural aptitude for pure Abstraction, for deduction, for construction, *a priori*, of the philosopher, who, in his work and systemati-

cally, proceeded by induction, putting the particular at the beginning and the general at the end of every reasoning, nourishing them with classified facts and coloured images, presenting the abstract to us as an extract, an extract of which one still sees the prolongings which continued into the concrete, ever leading us to the idea of the philosopher through the sensation of the artist (A. C.).

Appendix II

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

(FRAGMENTS)

(July 1850)

The History of Philosophy entirely resembles Natural History. Organic types, like philosophical ideas, have their development, their connections, their progress, their conditions of existence, their causes of waste.

One point especially deserves preliminary consideration. The philosophical idea, left to itself, would, like the organic idea, go by a straight and continuous motion towards its fixed goal. But the one is submitted to a moral temperature as the other to a physical temperature. The moral, religious, artistic, and emotional state of the country determine the special production of such and such a philosophical idea. Great account must therefore be taken of it to explain, at a given moment, the wherefore of such and such a lacuna abortion, or development.

Before going further, reason must be given for this comparison between Natural History and Philosophy.

Given a power of producing systems, this power exists hypothetically in the nation in question. Now this power is determined by the circumstances in which it finds itself. There is always a strange element, which is like matter for the organic idea. This is the prejudices, habits, environment, education, religion, and beliefs of the philosopher in question.

* * * * *

APPENDIX II

Philosophy has four epochs—India, Greece, Scholasticism, and Modern Philosophy. The chronological order of the systems of India is unknown to us. I know nothing of Scholasticism. The two, moreover, are non-free movements, and the prevailing religion must, in both cases, have constrained and deviated the movement of the human mind.

There remains the Modern School, but I know nothing of the first part of it, the XVIth century School. I will therefore postpone the examination of it to some future time. I will only examine the moral situation from which the Modern School has been evolved.

I.

1. An anterior theological Philosophy existed—Scholasticism. 2. The whole of Antiquity—Pythagoreans, Alexandrins, Platonists, Stoics, Epicureans—was found again; and there was an active movement against the Church, the power of ecclesiastical authority was weakened, there was a universal, rapid, and disorderly flight of the human mind after a long imprisonment.

II.

In the XVIIth Century.

1. Power of the Church, which prevents Philosophy from giving a personal solution on the Absolute Objective, and inclines it towards the Subjective. 2. A Spirit of Regularity, Order, and Clearness, which causes a search for Method.

III.

In the XVIIIth Century.

1. Progress of Physical Science, inclining towards Sensuality and Materialism. 2. Enmity towards Christianity, and consequently against the anterior Idealism which defended it. 3. Influence of England, free in Politics and in Thought, and which is in its nature practical and sensualistic.

IV.

In the XIXth Century.

1. Universal Scepticism, producing Kant's attempt and Scepticism. 2. Need of beliefs, producing the objective systems of Germany. 3. Renascence of Spiritualism, giving to Philosophy its idealistic character. 4. Sentiment of the independent progress of Man (Hegel).

Also, as a general cause, the development of the Subjective; Christian influence, psychological analyses of sermons, of direction, or dramatic works, of novels. Development of the sentiment of the *ego*.

Also again, God everywhere, Immortality, Providence, Morality, Free Choice, Christian dogma.

Such, or nearly such, I think, are the exterior causes which have modified the law of the philosophical movement, without straining it, for it is free.

Subjective Character of Christianity.

The ancient moral temperature in which the Greek Philosophy was developed is the moment of sensation and of the Objective.

That in which Modern Philosophy was developed is the Idealistic, Subjective Moment; it is Christianity.

1. Moral and subjective character of the Gospel. To love, to be pure, to be inwardly agreeable to God.

2. St. Augustine's influence throughout the whole of the Middle Ages. Almost an exclusive influence. *Deum animam tantum scire cupio.*

3. Practical organization of the Church to moralize and spiritualize. Sermons, convents, rules of direction, Mass.

4. Character of God, who is a moral Man. Also Jesus, God. Analysis of God is thereby Analysis of Man.

5. Christian Spiritualism; salvation being the only important thing, one should trouble exclusively about the soul.

6. Contrast between the coarseness of the real world and the idealness of this doctrine. Thence, inward searchings, love, development of the affective, feeling, and passive part in us.

The character of Christianity is therefore to bring the reflexion of Man to bear exclusively on Man. Which is precisely the subjective tendency.

As to the subjective doctrine, the germ of it is in St. Augustine, who begins like Descartes by the *cogito*, and who justifies the senses by stating that they reveal to us but their modifications. These are the characters by which Christianity is the third moment of the second period. But its anti-philosophical character, its servitude to the sacred texts, its mysteries, its religious and practical nature, its theory of faith, and its innumerable incoherences, prevent it from being a philosophical system. It is simply a reconciling of divers tendencies and doctrines, and a machine for action.

As to its nature, it is difficult to define it, by reason of its incoherencies, and it varies according to ages.

However, here are the principal characters:

1. Anti-realism. The earth is a place of exile.

2. Morality and idealistic elevation. God is the Sovereign Perfection and the Sovereign Good. "God," says Joinville, "is so good and excellent a thing that nothing is above Him."

3. Morality founded on relations between persons, and not on the relations between one person and abstract Good. One must love God, not the Good, and do God's will, not what is good. Thence the development of faith and love (feminine and passive side), weakness of reason, and of liberty (virile and active side).

There are now two different interpretations of God and His will:

1. God, a King. To found His kindgom on earth by submitting everything to the Church (Bible side). It is the Papal, Ecclesiastical, Jesuistic, and Ultramontane Spirit.

2. God, the Ideal. To become united to Him through love,

to take all will, all personality, from oneself, to become absorbed in Him (Gospel side). It is the mystical, Franciscan, Molinish spirit. Neo-Catholics through Love, Catholic-socialists.

General Historical Movement.

1. The East: Egypt, Persia, Syria, Asia Minor, Phœnicia and Judæa. Some traces of India.

Faith, Mysticism, Idealistic Pantheism, Mysteries, Proselytism, *Religious Element.*

2. Greece: Arts, Philosophy, Science, Worship of Strength and of Pleasure, Cult of Man, Genius of the Finite.

Scientific and *Philosophical* Elements.

3. Rome: Politics, Conquests, Administration, Legislation, Organization, Genius of the Finite.

Practical and Political Element.

The epitome of the three is Christianity.

4. German Barbarians: Feudality, the Independent *Ego*, the Lay Spirit, Element of Realism and Freedom.

4b. The battle against the Church begins with Philippe le Bel, Jean de Meung, etc. . . .

The epitome of the two is the Modern Spirit, manifested by German science, the French Revolution, German and French Art, English industry, etc. . . .

What I know of the East and of other countries leads me to believe that they are isolated, or precursors of the universal movement, who have a movement of their own; but that movement has no effect upon ours, which is the true one.

Principle for the Classification of Systems.

1. *Metaphysicians:* To have the definition of the Being (the All) and the order of what it contains.

2. *Psychologists:* To have the definition of the Soul and the order of all that it contains.

(The intermediary solution would be: 1, To give a Meta-

physic containing a Psychology; 2, to reach Metaphysic through Psychology.)

That is the principle which I have stated, and it is certain that the Academicians, Pyrrhonians, Sceptics, Stoicians, and Epicureans on one side, and on the other Locke, Hutchinson, Ferguson, Smith, Reid, D. Stewart, Hamilton, Brown, Condillac, Helvetius, Tracy, and Laromiguière belonged to the second class. It is also certain that the Neoplatonists, the Germans, and M. Cousin, who started from it, have re-entered Metaphysics through Psychology.

This classification is therefore good. It must be noticed however:

1. That (subjective) systems are a belittling of Philosophy, caused by despair of making Metaphysics objective.

2. That Psychology exists in all objective systems, only that it is subordinate to the science of the All.

3. That there is some Metaphysic in subjective systems (question of Certainty, God and the Immortality of the Soul, Materialism, etc.), which we only classify according to their predominance.

4. That it must necessarily be so, in order to have a Philosophy, that is to say, a general Science, the epitome of sciences.

This leads me to correct what I wrote last year.

The essence of Philosophy is to be *the* Science, the total Science, the epitome of other sciences, the System of Knowledge. This system embraces the Objective and the Subjective.

1. Either the subjective is enveloped in the system of the objective, as a part, with no distinction,

2. Or it is separate from it and considered almost exclusively.

This is the principle of their classification as passing and transitory systems.

Progress must consist in preparing a non-transitory system. This preparation consists in proclaiming direct, personal, analytical observation. Hypotheses may have a history and

succeed each other by overturning each other. This has hitherto been the mode of development of Philosophy. Given a conception, or hypothesis, it is applied to divers cases and made into a system; that is its development. It then manifests contradictions which lead to another hypothesis, and so on.

Now we may notice that, for the last three centuries, sciences have been coming one by one out of this groove and turning to direct observation; that Psychology and the moral sciences have just taken this turning, and that the facts which they observe are no longer contested.

It remains to be seen whether General Philosophy or Metaphysics itself can find a similar method.

Now it is clear that the most natural means, which is to generalize the results of other sciences, would not make it into a science. It would have no proper object, and the last results of each science always being contested hypotheses, it would itself be but a hypothesis, still more contested—what indeed it has ever been. Thus it would hardly change its nature. To remove this difficulty, it suffices to notice: 1. That it is the science of the Possible and not of the Real. Which leads it to find its method in the analysis of *ideas*, in their definition and comparison, whence result some theorems. As such, it is a sort of abstract Mathematics. 2, That it is the science of the Necessary, not of the Accidental. Which leads it, when occupied with the Real World, to seek for a means to deduce this World, and prevents it from observing it.

It is well to notice that all those tendencies are to be found in our times.

Let us add to that what we have said on the causes of error in Philosophy.

1. Its progress consists in substituting observation and deduction *a priori* to hypothesis.

2. Its progress consists in substituting the total to the partial definition of the Absolute.

These two propositions could already be deduced from the

very idea of Philosophy. What is the true definition of the All? *True definition* implies the analytical deductive form. The *All* implies the Total Absolute.

Compare the corresponding epochs of the two analogous periods:

1. The Ionians, Abderitans, etc., to the Philosophers of the Renaissance.
2. The Eleates, Pythagoreans, Plato, to the Cartesians.
3. Aristotle to Leibnitz.
4. Locke, Condillac, Rousseau, the English Moralists, Hume, to the Epicureans, Stoicians, Academicians, Sceptics.
5. The Neoplatonists to the Germans. For instance, for No. 2, why a scale of Intelligibles in Antiquity and God, Individual, total of the intelligibles for the moderns?

The consequences of this fact are very grave; the German Pantheism of our times is entirely founded on the following principle: God is the *one* form of the world. Having considered the formula "Ens realissimus" they have admitted that it possessed all the properties of Immensity, Eternity, Unity, and Necessity which the theists attributed to it. But they have judged that they required to see what is contained in this Being, and what is the nature or the divers species of this Reality which it contains. For Reality, Real, Being, etc., are abstracts, mere points of view of determinate concretes endowed with a proper form. Thence it follows that the Ens realissimus is but the totality of the determinate possible concretes. It ensues that it is the World. That being done, the Germans tried to construct the World, seeking *a priori* what are the possible determinate concretes, and binding them together.

General Theory of Systems.

A system is an organized Being of which the soul is a general idea, a general proposition: it is that proposition which is to be found. The means is to enumerate the different propositions

of the System, to find the general propositions on which they depend and the more general proposition from which these come. (Ex. : M. Ravaisson, *Exposition of Stoicism.*)

Notice that this is the march of every science ; each science studies a thing which is *one*, the human body, the animal series, the chemical body, etc. Its method is to gather properties and to go back to the definition or general proposition ; and Philosophy, which is the science of the All, likewise seeks the definition of the All.

1. First, notice that all systems are not *one*, that the author often has two or more principles, really contradictory, and that his effort is to conciliate them.

For instance, Malebranche : He has a theory of the Ideas which ought to lead him straight to Spinozism ; and a theory of the *Ego* and of Consciousness which leads him away from it.

2. Besides the philosophical forces and principles there are some of another kind which act. For instance, Religion. Malebranche has the Universal Being for a God. His Christianity forces him to make of Him a person, a man, distinct from the World.

3. The Philosopher's principle is not always an explicit definition of the Being. All Philosophies do not reach this altitude ; nor do they all clearly free their principle ; for instance, Descartes.

Aristotle, the Neoplatonists, Spinoza, and the Germans alone fully understood the idea of Philosophy.

4. A complete deduction is not drawn out of the principle stated, as in Malebranche. For instance, Spinoza and he positing as general modes of the Being, and only modes known to us —Extension and Thought. This fault is general in modern Christian systems, and shocks one especially after reading the Ancients.

The great reason being that our God being a Creator, and His act being incomprehensible, nothing can be deduced from Him. So that the system is cut in halves and made of two pieces, badly stuck together.

It is clear that this opposition of Thought and Extension, of the Spiritual and the Material, comes from the old opposition instituted by Christianity between the soul and the body.

(See the end of each note-book.)

The end of Philosophy is a definition of the All considered as indivisible.

The work of the historian of Philosophy is to disengage from each system the definition of the All and to deduce it from it.

Opposition of the Modern to the Antique period.

I have already touched upon this question, but must come back to it.

The same law is seen here as in embryogenia; every new species traverses the Phases or States traversed by the former, but brings with it a differential personal element. Thus the human embryo has striking analogies with the polypus, the radiary, the mollusc, the fish, the reptile, the bird, etc. It is all that successively, but with a special character of its own which makes it a human embryo, a superior character which gives it a destiny which the others had not.

Thus each individual reproduces in itself a succession of systems and civilizations, but with that superior character that it is aided by the superior civilization of his own century.

The world is a collection of individuals in an ascending order; each of them having gone through all the inferior degrees in its formation, but having given them its personal character.

Thus does modern Philosophy traverse the same states and systems as Ancient Philosophy, but with a personal and superior element.

In order to know this element we must observe: 1, the starting-point; 2, the simultaneous exterior actions.

Modern Philosophy is the outcome:

1. Of Antiquity through Scholasticism.

2. Of Antiquity through the Renaissance.
3. Of Antiquity through Christianity.

It has lived through Christianity under the influence of Antiquity. This is very grave. It is clear that there will not be an entirely new beginning, that the transformed Antiquity is in use, and that the new combination will in every point be superior to the former. We start from a more elevated point than the Ancients.

The first Philosophy (that of the Renaissance and Protestantism) is not serious. A serious Philosophy proclaims a principle, a method, draws it from itself, invents it, and produces an organized individual, which is a system. The Renaissance has no principle of its own. It is a copy from the Ancients, an imitation. Protestantism is great as a historical epoch and insignificant as a philosophical epoch. It has neither method nor dogma.

The only man with an original system is Hobbes. He represents the epoch of Matter. He is a Materialist and a mathematician. Bacon, Galileo, Torricelli, Harvey, Copernicus, etc., come within the same range of movement. The first philosopher who really proceeds from modern society is Descartes. He emerges from Christianity, as Thales emerges from Paganism. He proceeds from the common ground of the spirit of his time, Christianity, and opposes it by proclaiming a free personal principle and a method. Descartes' is a philosophical Christianity. His philosophy lives, transforms itself, and forms a real epoch in the human mind.

The Renaissance philosophers, on the contrary, do not leave any school; there are no polemics amongst them. They are isolated points, pure curiosities, accidents. They are the dead called forth, and immediately disappearing.

It may be said, in general, that a real and living philosophy becomes formal when the metaphysical system practised in the world at the time needs to be translated into its philosophical form. Philosophy is a form, a mode of existence of the human mind. It only really exists when it expresses in its own way

the human mind of the time. If not, it does not exist; or else, lacking personal force, it reproduces an old system. But then it still lacks the principle of life. The first condition to be counted in History as a real epoch of Development is to be, by itself.

It is to be noticed that the materialist spirit of the first period, expressed by Pomponace, Vanini, Montaigne, Sanchez, the sixteenth century literature, Bacon, the physical sciences, and Hobbs, is propagated in England and in France by Gassendi, Bernier, Ninon de Lenclos' society, and some libertines, and joins Locke and the seventeenth century, after filtering under the earth.

Appendix III

PLAN OF THE LESSONS IN PHILOSOPHY GIVEN AT NEVERS IN 1851-1852.

1st	Lesson :	Of the object of Philosophy.
2nd	,,	Method and Division of Philosophy.
3rd	,,	Object and Legitimacy of Psychology.
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9th	,,	Of the Education of the Senses and of Acquired Perceptions.
10th	,,	Of Imagination properly so called.
11th	,,	Of the Association of Ideas.
12th	,,	Of Memory.
13th	,,	Of Induction.
14th	,,	Attention, Comparison, Abstraction.
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19th	,,	Reason : idealistic opinions.
20th	,,	Reason : refutation of idealistic opinions.
21st	,,	Analysis of the Ideas and of the axioms of Time and Space.
22nd	,,	Analysis of the Idea of the Infinite (mathematics), and of the axioms of Cause, Substance, Identity.

23rd Lesson: Analysis of the Idea of the Perfect.
24th „ Theory of Reason.
25th „ Present State of the Mind. Nature of the Ideas, their Origin.
26th „ Progress of Knowledge.
27th „ (Sensibility) Of Pain and Pleasure.
28th „ Of Sensation.
29th „ Of the divers Senses.
30th „ Of Images (in a note: See the Theory of Intelligence).
31st „ Of Desire.
32nd „ Desires excited by Sensations.
33rd „ Sentiments and Desires caused by Ideas (Sentiments and Desires caused by the Idea of Ourselves, regardless of the exterior).
34th „ Sentiments and Desires caused by the Idea of Ourselves with regard to the exterior.
35th „ Sentiments and Desires caused by the Idea of another Being without consideration for a third.
36th „ Sentiments and Desires caused by the Idea of another Being with consideration for a third.
37th „ Sentiments and Desires caused by Ideas of Reason (the Beautiful, the Good, the Perfect).
38th „ Progress of the Passions.
39th „ Will.
40th „ Volition.
41st „ Liberty of Volition.
42nd „ Influence of the Volition on Action.
43rd „ Movement.
44th „ Movements determined by Ideas.
45th „ Voluntary and acquired Movements.
46th „ Of Habit.
47th „ Spirituality of the Soul.
48th „ Relations between the Physical and the Moral.
49th „ General theory.

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